This is a digital copy of a book that was preserved for generations on library shelves before it was carefully scanned by Google as part of a project to make the world's books discoverable online.

It has survived long enough for the copyright to expire and the book to enter the public domain. A public domain book is one that was never subject to copyright or whose legal copyright term has expired. Whether a book is in the public domain may vary country to country. Public domain books are our gateways to the past, representing a wealth of history, culture and knowledge that's often difficult to discover.

Marks, notations and other marginalia present in the original volume will appear in this file - a reminder of this book's long journey from the publisher to a library and finally to you.

Usage guidelines

Google is proud to partner with libraries to digitize public domain materials and make them widely accessible. Public domain books belong to the public and we are merely their custodians. Nevertheless, this work is expensive, so in order to keep providing this resource, we have taken steps to prevent abuse by commercial parties, including placing technical restrictions on automated querying.

We also ask that you:

+ *Make non-commercial use of the files* We designed Google Book Search for use by individuals, and we request that you use these files for personal, non-commercial purposes.

+ *Refrain from automated querying* Do not send automated queries of any sort to Google's system: If you are conducting research on machine translation, optical character recognition or other areas where access to a large amount of text is helpful, please contact us. We encourage the use of public domain materials for these purposes and may be able to help.

+ *Maintain attribution* The Google "watermark" you see on each file is essential for informing people about this project and helping them find additional materials through Google Book Search. Please do not remove it.

+ *Keep it legal* Whatever your use, remember that you are responsible for ensuring that what you are doing is legal. Do not assume that just because we believe a book is in the public domain for users in the United States, that the work is also in the public domain for users in other countries. Whether a book is still in copyright varies from country to country, and we can't offer guidance on whether any specific use of any specific book is allowed. Please do not assume that a book's appearance in Google Book Search means it can be used in any manner anywhere in the world. Copyright infringement liability can be quite severe.

About Google Book Search

Google's mission is to organize the world's information and to make it universally accessible and useful. Google Book Search helps readers discover the world's books while helping authors and publishers reach new audiences. You can search through the full text of this book on the web at `http://books.google.com/`

44.237.

MEN AND WOMEN

OR

MANORIAL RIGHTS.

VOL. III.

MEN AND WOMEN

OR

MANORIAL RIGHTS.

BY THE

AUTHOR OF THE "ADVENTURES OF SUSAN HOPLEY."

i.e. Mrs. Cooke.

PUCK. "Lord what fools these mortals be!"

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. III.

LONDON
SAUNDERS AND OTLEY, CONDUIT STREET.
1844.

BIBLIOTHECA BODLEIANA

MEN AND WOMEN:

OR,

MANORIAL RIGHTS.

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

"Who should this stranger be?"

FATAL CURIOSITY.

"Fraus est celare fraudem."

"Juncta Juvant."

As soon as Lady Eastlake had gathered from the avowal of Mr. Rivers, that at the time he left London he had set out on a journey to the house of his wife's uncle in the North, she had set about ascertaining the truth of this story, by employing a person to inquire if he had been seen there at that particular period; and the result was a confirmation of his own account. The next thing was to trace him

thence, and to make out whither he had next proceeded; but this was not so easy. He had left the house, as he had arrived, on foot; and was supposed to have walked from the nearest town, and to have returned there. The distance of the town was about six miles: and as it was a pretty large one, there were several inns in it, and a great many coaches going to and fro. Moreover, Mr. Rivers' visit had happened at the time of a large cattle fair, and there had, consequently, been so many strangers about, that no individual had a chance of attracting any particular attention, either amongst the innkeepers or the stage coachmen. The servants of the uncle, from whom the little intelligence the agent obtained was gathered, related, that the visit of Mr. Rivers had been evidently quite unexpected; that it was very short, and, they believed, very unwelcome; and they had received orders, if he returned, not to admit him. He never had returned, but what had become of him, after he had left the house, nobody could tell, nor could any inquiries enable the agent to ascertain. He next directed his perquisitions nearer home; but, on many accounts, it was necessary to conduct them with extreme

caution. The master of Eastlake was not a person to be lightly slandered or impugned; and the least suspicion of the object of the inquiries would have closed every mouth. The different inns, within a certain circuit, were visited, and the stage-coachmen interrogated; but the needful precautions rendered the process slow and uncertain, and nothing could be elicited that tended to confirm Lady Eastlake's suspicions. This want of proof did not shake her convictions, but the disappointment preyed upon her mind, and worried her incessantly, especially when William was taken, and the period of his trial drew near; not so much because the innocent was about to suffer, as because she thought, the guilt once fixed upon him, the criminal, in the judgment of the world, found, convicted, and executed, there would be an end of inquiry, doubt, or speculation; the subject would be dismissed from men's minds, and it would be very difficult to recal attention to it, and still more to turn suspicion in the direction she desired; and it was on this account that she had employed counsel to defend him. Lord Belton and the magistrates had treated her insinuations with so much scorn that she felt it would be utterly useless to renew them,

unless she had some circumstance to allege that would give them a colour, and justify her in demanding an investigation. But none were to be found; the agent reported that his labours had produced no fruits; and the only comfort that was left her was, to talk without ceasing on the subject to Nelly, whose convictions were, if possible, stronger than her own, and to listen to her confident vaticinations, that, "though the devil might hide him under his cloak for a time, just till he'd done all his work, they'd be sure to quarrel at last; and then he'd send him about his business, and, with God Almighty's blessing, we shall see him on the gallows yet."

"Not I, Nelly; you may," Lady Eastlake would say; "but I shall be in my grave."

"Then you'll see it from the world of spirits, darlent; and him beside you, your own flesh and blood. Happy you'll be together, in Paradise, that day."

"I wish I'd your faith, Nelly. I wish I was sure I should see him again in another world."

"Sure you will, darlent. If you'd only listen to the blessed Father Mahoney, he'd tell you all about it."

"But you know I'm not a Catholic, Nelly."

"More's the pity!" said Nelly.

"Father Mahoney would tell me I should never go to Paradise, nor my son neither."

"I'd be sorry to hear him say that," said Nelly, puzzled betwixt her reverence for Father Mahoney on the one hand, and her enthusiastic affection for her master and mistress on the other.

"Why not make sure?" she added, after a pause, looking up anxiously at her mistress.

"Make sure of what, Nelly?"

"Of Paradise," answered Nelly.

"What do you mean? Turn Catholic?"

"Ay, sure; wouldn't you do more for his sake that's gone?"

"I'd do anything for his sake, Nelly; but you know, according to your own notions, there'd be no use in my turning Catholic, as John was not one. If I went to Paradise, I should not meet him there."

"That's true," said Nelly, puzzled again; "unless, maybe, your convarsion might do it, if you died in the true faith, and the prayers of the priest, and the masses he'd say for the souls of you both.

However, as Nelly was not sure what might

be the result of her mistress's following her advice, till she had consulted Father Mahoney on the subject, she pressed the matter no further just then, but she took the earliest opportunity of mentioning it to the priest, and inquiring how far the mother's conversion might be likely to benefit the son. The worthy father, however, who was by no means possessed with the rage of proselytism, recommended her to leave Lady Eastlake's religious opinions alone, and not interfere with what did not concern her; but, having once touched on her mistress's sorrows, Nelly was not very easily stopped; and she ran on from one thing to another, till she had related the whole history of their suspicions about Mr. Rivers, and the ineffectual pains they had been taking to ascertain whether or not he had been in the neighbourhood at the time of the murder. As the narration proceeded, the priest, who had at first seemed to think Nelly's talk very idle and tiresome, suddenly became more attentive, not only lending his ear to what she had to say, but making use of the influence he had over her, to question her very narrowly as to the grounds of the suspicion she and her mis-

tress entertained; but these seemed all to merge in their own aversion to Mr. Rivers. He had been disappointed of the estate when a boy, and had been envious of the young heir, and, as Nelly said, had borne a spite against him; but it did not appear that he had ever taken any ill means of shewing his envy or gratifying his malignity, so that his entertaining the passions at all seemed a mere presumption on the part of the mother and nurse. Then, he was a gambler, and had wasted his fortune, and reduced his family to beggary. That was very bad, certainly, but it did not follow that he was therefore capable of committing a murder, and it was taking a long stride to draw such a conclusion from such premises. The only other presumption against him was, that he had left town a short time previous to the catastrophe, and that he had quitted his uncle's house the very day before it occurred, which would just have allowed time for his arrival in the neighbourhood of Eastlake.

"And who else should do it," said Nelly, "but himself, that has got the estate by it?"

"That does not follow," answered the

father; "most people advantage somebody or another by their death, and yet very few are murdered for their inheritance."

"But he hadn't an enemy in the world besides Marmaduke Rivers," objected Nelly.

"He went the way to make many," replied Father Mahoney.

"It was just the fault of the girls themselves," said Nelly—"if it's about them you mean. They couldn't keep out of his way."

The priest shook his head, and bade Nelly not to allow her partiality for her foster-son to confound her notions of right and wrong; and he strictly forbade her from being the instrument of publishing any ill reports about Mr. Rivers. "Most likely," he said, "the man that's going to be tried will turn out to be the assassin."

Nelly felt very sorry now, that she had spoken to the father; the whole fruits of her motion were, that she had got her mouth shut. She might have abused and accused Marmaduke Rivers, as she always called him, to her heart's content before, but now that the priest had forbidden her, she durst not disobey him. However, Nelly, had she known all, had less

reason to be dissatisfied with the result of her experiment than she imagined.

It so happened, that, at the period of Mr. Rivers' sojourn at "The Cat and Bagpipes," one of the good father's flock, who lived in that neighbourhood, was sick, and the priest, in going to attend his bedside at an early hour, had observed a gentleman issue from the little roadside inn, and turn away in the direction of Calderwood. His mind had never recurred to the subject again, till some time after, business having taken him in the neighbourhood of the Castle, he chanced to meet the squire, and was somewhat surprised to discover that it was the same person. But no suspicion was awakened by the discovery. The father knew nothing whatever of Eastlake affairs; with the exception of Nelly, he had not a disciple dwelling in that direction; and Nelly, though unshaken in her faith, had for a long time been rather negligent of its ceremonies. Mr. Rivers might have been on a visit at the Castle, or at the house of any of the neighbouring gentry, for anything he knew; and having plenty of business of his own to attend to, he had never thought more

of the matter. But now the coincidence struck him; he recalled perfectly that the day he had met the stranger, had been the day of Sir John's death; and since his being in that quarter was unknown to Lady Eastlake, or, according to Nelly's account, to any one else, it certainly did appear probable that he had had some motives for concealment. The good man pondered seriously on the subject, and felt at some loss how to proceed. The trial of the supposed assassin was close at hand, and he could not but remember that justice is sometimes blind in more senses than one. William Bell might be condemned and executed, and it might afterwards be discovered that another was the criminal. If that other *should* prove to be the Lord of Eastlake, Father Mahoney felt that he should ever have to reproach himself for having permitted the innocent to suffer. On the other hand, to be the first to stir in such a business, to set afloat such a suspicion, which might after all prove perfectly groundless, was a most painful, and even a dangerous office. As regarded Mr. Rivers and his family, provided he were innocent, it would be cruel in the extreme; and as regarded himself, he could not fail to raise

up a host of enemies, and to bring a load of odium on his faith. He had hatreds and prejudices enough to encounter as it was; and he could not but be sensible of the ill consequences that might result from a false step on the present occasion. It occurred to him that he might write an anonymous letter to one of the county magistrates; but, in the first place, if he did, it might not be attended to. Considering the rank and wealth of the party aimed at, the magistrate would probably be very glad to put the paper in the fire, and say nothing about it; and in the second place, Father Mahoney was a good, honest soul, and he naturally recoiled from "stabbing men in the dark" with so base a weapon.

In this perplexity, he resolved to pay John Gubbins a visit, and endeavour to ascertain what Mr. Rivers had been doing there, and whether John knew who he was. With this view, he dropped in to the "Cat and Bagpipes," and making the excuse of a long walk, he asked for something to eat, and, without much difficulty, drew John into conversation; and it was not long before he discovered that the subjects that were uppermost in his own mind—namely, the murder of Sir John East-

lake, and the approaching trial of William Bell, were also uppermost in the mind of his companion. He had no need to introduce the matter, Gubbins introduced it himself, by asking the father whether he thought the young soldier would be convicted.

"I fear," said the priest, "there is little chance of his escaping."

"And if he is condemned, how soon will he be hanged?"

"Within a few days," answered the father.

"That seems unhuman, doesn't it, sir?" said John.

"On the contrary," replied the father; "it would be more inhuman to prolong so wretched an existence as that of a condemned criminal. All he needs is a few hours to make his peace with his Maker, and then, if he is to die, the sooner the better."

"But suppose a man was innocent, sir, it gives him no chance."

"That's true," replied the priest; "but when a man is condemned, it is always supposed to be on certain grounds. At the same time, human nature is fallible, and there do sometimes happen lamentable mistakes. Of course, it is the duty of everybody who has the

slightest grounds for believing a man innocent, to come forward at the trial and produce them. If he do not, he may have the blood of a guiltless man upon his head."

"It is a very awkward situation for a man to be in!" said John Gubbins, somewhat abstractedly.

"What is a very awkward situation?" inquired the priest.

"Not to be able to see one's way clear," said John. "A man would wish to do what's right, but still people don't like to get themselves into trouble."

"It's better to get into trouble by doing our duty than by neglecting it," returned the priest.

"That's true, sir; but it's hard to know sometimes what *is* one's duty. A man may do more harm than good by meddling sometimes, besides hurting himself."

The priest saw John's scruples and difficulties, and sympathized with them too nearly not to make allowance for them. He was satisfied that the host had some reason for suspecting his visitor; and that, like himself, he was perplexed betwixt the fear of letting an innocent man suffer on the one hand, or of

taking a wrong step on the other. But John's situation was not near so critical as his own. He had neither the same enmity, nor the same risk of misinterpretation to encounter. He was an ignorant man, and if he committed an error, it would be set down to ignorance, and not to malice. Besides, as the case stood, it was certainly more immediately John's business to give information than his.

"We are not required to hurt ourselves needlessly," said the father; "at the same time, we must not let pusillanimous fears stand in the way of our doing right. Now, to suppose a case: this young man, the soldier, seems likely to be condemned on what is called presumptive evidence. There is no doubt a strong presumption that he is guilty; there is a motive for the crime, and he is proved to have been in the neighbourhood at the time—circumstances which do not seem to apply to anybody else. But now suppose, just for the sake of argument, that you or I, or anybody else, happened to be aware that some other person, under circumstances more or less suspicious, had also been observed lurking about within such a distance of the spot where the murder was committed, as to render it possible

he might have perpetrated the crime, you surely would not hesitate to make known the fact! It would be an imperative duty to do it."

"But wouldn't it be time enough to do it after the young man was condemned, sir?" said John; "because if he got off, there might be no need to do it, at all."

"Such a delay would be very wrong—very dangerous!" returned the father. "If you know anybody that has any information to give, recommend them to do it immediately, I beg."

"If I was of your persuasion, sir, I'd confess to you," said John.

"If you were one of my flock," said the priest, "I should use my authority to insist on your giving information if you have any to give."

"There certainly was a person that came here," said John, lowering his voice, "that I never could make out what he came for. God knows! I may be wrong—but odd thoughts have come into my mind, I can't deny it—it was just the very day before Sir John was shot. He got down off one of the coaches that passes my door, and the first thing he asks me was, where the squire was, and what company there was at

the Castle. When I told him the squire was at Sir James Dalton's, I thought he was a going off to him post haste; howsomever, he didn't—but he stayed here all night a writing of letters, sir; he engaged a bed, but he never got into it."

"Well," said the father, rising, for he wished to be as little mixed up with the affair as possible, "I must be moving—business calls me away; but your duty is plain: you must make these circumstances known directly in the proper quarter. Go to the nearest magistrate, and relate all you know."

"But I don't know anything, sir—that's the thing. Certainly, the gentleman came here asking about the squire and her ladyship, but that says nothing, you know."

"Why, no; but I suspect from your manner, Gubbins, that you have more reasons for suspicion than that."

"Why, certainly there was a circumstance, sir, that I couldn't help thinking of afterwards, when I had heard what had happened at the Four Stones——"

"Well, I must be going," said the priest, moving towards the door, for he was afraid John was about to tell him who the stranger

was—a piece of information he did not wish to be put in possession of—"so I'll wish you good day; but take my advice, and lose no time in making the affair known to the magistrate."

"I believe I must, sir," returned John; "but the circumstance I was going to mention was, that the gentleman——"

"Good morning, Mr. Gubbins! There's Mrs. Maguire 'll be waiting to speak to me; I see she's looking this way."

"He had a pair of pistols, sir," continued John, following the priest, and speaking in his ear.

"Pistols!" exclaimed the father, stopping short, and looking John in the face.

"He had, sir; a smallish pair they was, just such as a man could carry in his pocket. He *did* carry them in his pocket."

"Go to the magistrate, Gubbins!—go at once!" said the priest, as he stepped off the threshold; "if you don't, the blood of the innocent man may lie at your door."

"I believe I will, sir," replied Gubbins; "I'll go this very afternoon."

As John announced this determination in a very decided tone, and as his conscience seemed to have really taken the alarm, Father

Mahoney fully believed that he would adhere to his word; and as he was particularly desirous of keeping himself as clear as possible of so delicate a business, he resolved for the few days that were to intervene before the trial, to avoid the neighbourhood of "The Cat and Bagpipes," lest John should seize the opportunity of telling him more than he wished to know.

However, on the eve of the day that the assizes were to open, the worthy priest found himself in a very uneasy state of mind. The doubt—the "if John Gubbins should not have done what he promised!" which had occasionally darted across his mind in the interval, now became so importunate, that he could neither write nor read, nor think of his next Sunday's sermon; nor, in fact, do anything whatever but walk backwards and forwards in his little parlour, glancing over the blind every time he heard the sound of wheels, to see if it was John Gubbins, in his tax-cart, on his way to the assizes. But no; many were the vehicles that rolled or jolted past, according as the case might be, but neither John nor his tax-cart were to be seen; and as hour after hour flew by, and the priest considered that,

for anything he knew, William Bell's might be the first case called, his anxiety became altogether insupportable; so, suddenly seizing his hat, and bidding the servant not sit up for him, he put the key of the door in his pocket, and started for the "Cat and Bagpipes," a distance of about five miles.

It was late when he arrived at his destination, but the open door, the lights that gleamed from the windows, and the loud voices that echoed from within, shewed he would find no difficulty in gaining admittance. The house, being on the high road to the county town, was full of wayfarers, hastening thither on one errand or another, who had put up for the night, and were now merrily discussing the prospects of the prisoners, or the pleasures and profits that awaited themselves over their potations; and there, in the midst of them, sat John Gubbins himself, in the very act of lifting a tumbler of punch to his lips, with a twinkling eye that announced very distinctly that several jorums of that agreeable liquor had already travelled the same road.

But scarcely did Banquo's ghost create more disorder in the royal host, than did the unexpected appearance of the priest in the host of

"The Cat and Bagpipes." "Father Mahoney, sir!" said he, with a subdued eye, and the tumbler arrested half way betwixt the table and his mouth.

"It's me, John," said the priest, fixing his eye reprovingly on the culprit.

"Well, sir," said John, "I didn't expect to see you at this hour, sure enough! What will your reverence please to take?"

"I'll take a bit of bread and cheese, and a glass of ale, after my walk," replied the father; "but if you have a disengaged room, I should be glad to have it."

"I'm afeard there's not one in the house," returned John. "The women are gone to bed up stairs, and we're quite full below."

"Then I'll take what I want here," returned the father, seating himself at a corner of the table, whilst John placed what he required before him.

The respect the priest inspired, together with the suddenly-subdued tone of the host, necessarily lowered the tone of the company, and threw a considerable degree of restraint over their demeanour and conversation. At first, there was a universal silence, and each man sipped his glass with a grave and thoughtful

air, till some adventurous person hazarded a whisper to his neighbour, and a second followed his example. Then, the ice being broken, a murmur arose, at first low, but growing gradually louder, till, at length, they began to lean across the table, and talk to each other as they had done before, but only with more decorum, and less noisy demonstrations of merriment.

"If it wasn't about a woman, I'd stake my life he never done it," said a middle-aged person, in the dress of a serjeant; "but when there's one of that sex in the case, there's no telling what a man may be drove to. A man that's in love's got the devil for his master."

"Why, that depends on circumstances, I take it," replied the person he was addressing; who was a tall thin man, in a full suit of drab; "an honest and a vartuous woman, we're told, is above all price."

"No doubt of it," rejoined the tailor of the next village, a very diminutive man, who had married a shrew of five feet ten. "I respect vartue in a woman above all things."

"I've nothing to say to the contrary," said the serjeant; "but I've seen many a woman in the regiment, that was honest, and virtuous

too, that's led her husband a devil of a life."

"More on us have seen that besides you, sir," said John Gubbins, winking aside at the tailor.

"Howsomever, with respect to the young woman we was a talking on, I take it she wasn't at all to blame, neither one way nor t'other," observed the drab coat.

"Not she!" said John Gubbins. "It was all the mother's doing, from first to last. She stopt their letters, and that was the undoing of 'em."

"Poor fellow!" said the serjeant; "he was as good a soldier as ever carried a musket, till he got uneasy in his mind about the girl."

"A man that's crossed in love aren't fit to carry a musket nor a pack either," rejoined the gentleman in drab.

"Sir," said the tailor, "a man what's crossed in love's as useless as a tailor without his shears—he ha'n't no heart to anything." The little tailor loved his shrew, as many a man does.

"But I think, sir," said the serjeant, addressing his opposite neighbour, the drab coat, "that when this here reverend gentleman came

in, you was about to tell us a remarkable circumstance that had happened—I think you said as much as that you'd seen William Bell, after the murder."

"I've always thought it was him," said the drab coat, "though I knew nothing of it, at the time. I passed the evening in company with a young man—a very agreeable, intelligible gentleman I found him—it was at a house where I've been in the habit of putting up for some years; it never occurred to me who it was, though once or twice it came across me that I'd seen his face afore, which, no doubt, I had, when he was a boy—till I see in the papers, some time after, that he'd changed clothes with a wagoner. He'd got on a wagoner's frock and a fur cap."

"A good-looking, fresh-coloured young fellow, about my height?" said the serjeant.

"Much about," returned Gregory, for Gregory, we need not say, it was.

"You'd a miss there," observed one of the company; "there was as much as a couple of hundred pounds offered for him at that time, if I recollect."

"A miss is as good as a mile," said the tailor.

"I shouldn't have meddled with him," returned Gregory. "He didn't give me no idea whatsomever of being a spiller of blood, and I'm not one o' them as 'oud like to button my breeches pocket over the price of a fellow-creature's life. But the sing'lar part of the story was, that that same night the house was robbed. I lost something myself, but that's neither here nor there." Here Mr. Gregory heaved a sigh, and applied his glass to his lips, as if he sought to drown some painful reminiscence in its contents. "The man as did it supped in the same room with us, and what was sing'lar, was dressed exactly the same as young Bill—however, I thought the less of that, it being what most o' the labourers wears thereabouts. But he was an ill-looking dog as ever I see, and my mind misgave me there was something wrong about him; I even took the trouble of warning the woman of the house agen him—but it warnt of no use. He got up in the middle of the night, and made off with what he could lay his hands on—went into the bar, where the landlady was asleep, and took the money out of the basket that stood beside her on the table, where she'd been supping. I wonder he didn't cut her throat, for my part."

"I remember seeing something about that in the paper," said John Gubbins; "at first we heard it was William Bell that had done it."

"No, no; it was t'other chap. William Bell paid his score over night, and went away, like a decent man, in the morning, after the maid was up."

"But the thing as puzzles me," said the blacksmith of Calderwood, "if William Bell didn't do it—that is, didn't shoot the squire, I mean—who was it as shot him?"

"Ay, that's the question," said John Gubbins, glancing at Father Mahoney.

"That's what I want to know," said the tailor.

"It's what we all want to know," said the serjeant.

"He warnt robbed, so it couldn't be for his money," observed the tailor.

"I should sooner have suspected young Graham than William Bell," said the blacksmith, "only that he cleared himself before the magistrates. I saw him at Calderwood the day before, looking more fit for a strait-waistcoat, than to be going at large about the country."

"That was all along of Jessie Matthieson,"

said John Gubbins. "She's got a deal to answer for!"

"She'll have a deal to answer for if William Bell's hanged, may be," said Gregory, "for 'twas she informed agen him, and it's my opinion he didn't do it, after all."

"Who do you think did, then?" inquired Gubbins.

"Them that's above knows that!" replied Gregory. "But he was a sad man, the squire. It wasn't one girl as satisfied him, nor two, nor three. He must have made many enemies, and a trigger's soon drawn."

"But there was nobody seen about, as far as I hear," said Lawson.

"If there *had* been anybody lurking about for such a purpose, somebody must have seen 'em, and we should have heard of it before this."

This observation of the serjeant's was received in silence; some of the company lifted their glasses to their lips, and took a sup; and the priest having thrown an expressive glance towards the host, rose from the table, and quitted the room, followed by John.

"I guess what you're come about, sir," said he. "I dare say I'm to blame; but when I

began to consider what it was I was a going to do—for to go for to accuse a gentleman like—hem!—a gentleman as I knows nothing about, and never set eyes on afore nor since, as I may say; it seemed so rash like and unproper that I couldn't make up my mind to it, no how. At the same time, I wont say that I don't feel uneasy; and all I wish is, he'd never thought o' stopping at my house at all. I shall most like get into trouble one way or t'other."

"I don't know why you should get into trouble by doing your duty," replied the father; "but it is very clear you'll get into trouble if you omit it. If you allow this young man to be condemned, without coming forward to mention certain circumstances, with respect to the stranger, that you have told me you think suspicious, I shall be obliged, in conscience, to make known your information myself; and some discredit will naturally fall on you for your neglect—which, remember, may not be attributed altogether to justifiable motives. However, I request to know what you intend to do, because, if you do not stir in this, I must; I cannot remain silent."

"Well, sir, I'd be sorry to do a shabby

thing," said John. "Dang it! it may bring me into trouble, or it mayn't; but I'll go. I'll harness the old mare to-morrow morning, and drive over to Mr. Dimond's, and tell him all about it—that is, I'll tell him as how a gentleman came to my house with a pair of pistols ——"

"Exactly, John; that is precisely what you have to do. Look in upon me in the morning, as you pass my door, in order that I may be sure you're on your way."

"I will, your reverence!" said John, and with a friendly shake of the hand, which Father Mahoney, though a learned man and a gentleman, did not disdain to give the humble host of "The Cat and Bagpipes"—but, indeed, it was because he *was* a gentleman, and because he had the better part of learning, *wisdom*—the fine essence which so many manipulators fail to extract from the grosser particles of learning—that he did not disdain it, the priest took his leave, and trudged his five miles home.

John Gubbins kept his word this time; and we have seen the result.

CHAPTER XXXIX.

"They that can answer must be less amazed
Than I am now."

CUPID'S REVENGE.

AMONGST the auditors of William Bell's trial, there were two on whom the evidence of John Gubbins fell like a thunder-clap—these were Henry Russell and Elias Longfellow, both of whom had been present as amateurs—the one to observe the law, the other to study the scene. There were also many of the county gentlemen present, who were equally surprised, if not equally distressed; and there were others who were not altogether so astonished as might have been expected. These were they to whom the air had wafted some of Nelly's gossip, or who had been in the way of hearing

the mysterious inuendos of Miss Grieves. Not that they had believed the rumour; on the contrary, they had treated it with contempt; still, certain it is, that no calumny, however apparently absurd and unfounded it may be, was ever uttered, that did not make an impression, more or less deep, on the minds of those who hear it. Amongst the candid, the generous, and the good natured, the impression will be slight—probably so slight, that they are themselves unconscious that any impression has been made at all—till, perhaps, some confirmatory rumour, or some other calumny aimed at the same quarter, revives the memory of the first; and they then find themselves suddenly half way on the road to believe the whole. This it is that makes small calumnies great evils. They act like small doses of poison, where each is insignificant in itself, but the gross amount is fatal; and as a calumny once uttered can never be entirely effaced, and as most people are ready to help it on its way, before they know whether it is true or false, and very few are just enough to run after it, and endeavour to arrest its progress, when they discover its real character, human beings should consider, that every

scandalous or cruel accusation or insinuation they permit themselves against their neighbour, is a drop of aqua toffana in his cup, which, drop by drop, may ere long amount to the dose that is mortal.

But no rumours had reached the inhabitants of Eastlake Castle; and although the singular depression and the strange nervous sensibility of Mr. Rivers had not only struck his two visitors, as well as everybody else, and had indeed often been discussed between them, the slightest idea that it could be connected with Sir John Eastlake's death had never occurred to their minds; as, indeed, how should it? And still less had they ever suspected that he had been on or near the spot at the period of the murder. It is true, John Gubbins had not named Mr. Rivers, nor in any way designated him as the mysterious stranger,—still, there was nobody present, who was at all acquainted with the circumstances of the two families, who did not immediately perceive that he was the person alluded to; and the two guests, who were both aware of his absence from London at the time, an absence they had never heard accounted for, were not likely to miss the allusion. Indeed, nobody whose

eye happened to be fixed on John Gubbins at the moment, could help entertaining a shrewd suspicion, that, although he did not choose to say so, he knew very well who the stranger was.

Both Russell and Elias were exceedingly attached to Mr. Rivers; as we have said, he was a person who naturally attracted regard. Moreover, the first expected shortly to become his son-in-law; and although the other had not ventured to indulge such aspiring visions, still he was deeply in love with Mary, and was not altogether without the consoling suspicion that she took a more than common interest in him. How such a sentiment should ever have entered her breast, his exceedingly humble appreciation of his own personal endowments rendered a miracle to his understanding; and the only way he could reconcile what he could scarcely doubt, was, by placing her partiality to the account of gratitude for the little services he had rendered her and her family in their troubles. At all events, the attachment of both the young men to the family was sincere and devoted; and both felt the shaft that was so unexpectedly aimed at their newly-recovered happiness and prosperity, as acutely as if it had been aimed

at their own. Before the evidence of John Gubbins, they had been conversing freely, and exchanging their remarks on the witnesses and their testimony as it was unfolded before them; but now, each conscious of his thoughts, was afraid to look at his friend, lest he should betray his own suspicions prematurely, or read their confirmation too legibly. Thus they sat still and silent, till the prisoner was remanded; and then Russell gasping out, "Shall we go?" they rose and left the court. Russell thrust his arm under that of Elias, and, as if by mutual consent, they turned down the first retired street they came to.

"What are we to think of this?" said Russell, at length breaking silence.

"God above knows!" answered Elias "I once heard Miss Mary say, that she believed Lady Eastlake had always hated her papa; can it be a machination of hers?"

"I've heard Caroline say the same thing," replied Russell. "But there must be some sort of foundation for the man's evidence—somebody must have been at his house, under peculiar circumstances, at that period, or he could never have come forward and made such an assertion.

"There must have been other people in the house, at the time, who can corroborate or disprove it, of course."

"Still, it does not follow that it was Mr. Rivers, for that the arrow's aimed at him we cannot doubt."

"There was something very peculiar about the man's countenance. I suspect he knows who it was, though he wouldn't tell."

"On the other hand," said Russell, "that confusion may have arisen from a consciousness that he was giving, if not altogether false evidence, yet perverted evidence. He may know that it was *not* Mr. Rivers, though the object of his being brought forward was to raise the suspicion that it was."

"That's very true—very possible, indeed!" returned Elias, glad to catch at so hopeful a suggestion.

"But, again," returned Russell, whose legal education had disposed him to look on both sides of a case, "there are circumstances that I don't understand, and that, after a suggestion of this sort, cannot but create uneasiness."

"But surely it's impossible," said Elias. "A man so humane—so little given to passion or violence! I have heard you say that he

was remarkable in London for never even losing his temper at the gaming table."

"That's true," replied Russell. "He has a particularly placid temper."

"And certainly he is very humane," reiterated Elias.

"No doubt of it," answered Russell; "it never can have been a deliberate act."

"And there can have been no quarrel," urged Elias. "The evidence of Lucy Graham contradicts that; so does her brother's."

"Suppose it was done on the instinct of the moment to protect the girl?" suggested Russell. "But, then, what should have brought him to that spot? or why should he be armed?"

"I am not prepared to believe he was there, yet," replied Elias. "You speak as if there was no doubt of his being the person Gubbins alludes to."

"Why, you know I'm a lawyer. I hope, with all my soul, it was not him! But a notion of this sort once put into one's head, one's mind naturally recurs to every circumstance that seems in any way corroborative. The best men have occasionally, by a combination of unforeseen circumstances, been led to com-

mit actions altogether inconsistent with their general character."

"Hardly, I think, such an action as this," returned Elias. "I can't imagine a good man, and an educated man, committing a murder in any case, unless he was out of his senses."

"Men, whose goodness had never been before doubted, have done it," returned Russell. "They may never have been subjected to the adequate degree of temptation. It's difficult to know men thoroughly. Then there's such a thing as sudden and temporary insanity."

"If I were to entertain the suspicion for a moment, that would be the only view I could take of it," said Elias; "but I can't entertain it."

"Nor I, seriously," replied Russell. "Still one can't help looking at an evidence so strange and unexpected in every point of view; more especially, that as far as it's possible to judge, I do not think the soldier guilty."

"If physiognomy is to go for anything, nor I, either," returned Elias.

The subject of most immediate perplexity, however, was to decide what they should do. It had been their intention to return to Eastlake immediately the trial was concluded, to ac-

quaint Mr. Rivers with the result, which he had expressed himself especially anxious to learn; and there was still more reason for hastening back now, since no time ought to be lost in acquainting him with what had happened. But the office had become very embarrassing. It was easy to abstain from words that might give pain or offence, but they both felt the impossibility of commanding their features; these would inevitably betray their conscious thoughts; and whether there were any foundation for their suspicions or not, how acute must be the pain they would inflict! and, provided there were none, how unpardonable the offence!

In the meantime, amongst those who had been very much surprised at the unexpected evidence adduced, and who had at once perceived at whom it was aimed, was Lord Belton, and, remembering the malignant feelings betrayed by Lady Eastlake and Nelly on a former occasion, and their eagerness to direct suspicion towards Mr. Rivers, he felt disposed to attribute the appearance of John Gubbins altogether to their machinations; and as he was uncertain whether there was anybody present who would feel it their duty to

inform Mr. Rivers of what had happened, he resolved on doing it himself. Instead, therefore, of returning to Lord Lorton's, at whose house he was staying, he started for Eastlake, where, as he had dined there two days before, there was no reason why his visit should create any astonishment. Nevertheless, when he entered the library where Mr. Rivers was sitting, it was impossible not to be aware of the agitation his appearance occasioned in that gentleman. It was so great, in short, that he seemed glued to his seat; he was both speechless and motionless. He made an attempt to rise, and his lips moved, but no sound proceeded from them, and he remained fixed to his chair, staring at Lord Belton with eyes where terror sat confessed, and which glared fearfully out of the thin pale face, marked with so many deep lines of care.

A new light seemed to break on the hitherto unsuspicious Lord Belton; he stood transfixed in the middle of the room, heartily repenting him of his officiousness, and quite at a loss how to proceed. But before either one or other of the gentlemen had recovered their presence of mind sufficiently to speak, a third party joined them, who seemed under no such

restraint. The window of the library, which led into the park, was open; and there, at this critical moment, appeared Nelly, with the countenance of a triumphant tigress.

"I hope I'm the first to bring you the news, Master Marmaduke, dear!" she cried. "I'd be sorry his lordship there, or anybody was afore me! The trial aint over, though; for what do you think? They ha'n't got the right man! I knew how it 'oud be all along. I knew it 'oud come out, sooner or later. The blood always cries up from the earth, and tells who spilt it. There you are, to be sure, in your fine castle and your fine park, and the lady and the young misses, all so proud and so fine! It wasn't for nothing you did it, was it, my jewel? But you see what the life of us is here, in this world of trouble! Just when we think we've got it all, comes the hangman and the jailors, and takes it away from us, poor craturs that we are! The Lord help us! So good-by to you, my jewel, and good luck to you! There's my lady, the darlent, I must go and tell her the news, but I waited by the road-side till the express came back, that I might be first with your honour. The blessed mother o' God be with you! and

you, too, my lord. Your lordship 'll remember what I and my lady said to you that day the blessed lamb lay a corpse here in his own house, not that I wish to say anything disrespectful to your lordship, as never injured me nor mine, but only just——"

Here Lord Belton, who, from the suddenness of Nelly's appearance, and the rapidity of her utterance, had stood listening in silent amazement to this incoherent address, stepped forward, and, by closing the window, put a period to her oration; whereupon, having lifted up her finger, and shaken her head with an ominous grin at the object of her aversion, she withdrew.

When Lord Belton turned from the window after performing this charitable office, he perceived that Mr. Rivers had fallen back in his chair in a state of insensibility.

CHAPTER XL.

"Oh, unexpected stroke, worse than of death!"
PARADISE LOST.

"I will a round unvarnish'd tale deliver."
OTHELLO.

GREAT was the sensation in the county when it was understood, the next morning, that Mr. Rivers had delivered himself, on the previous evening, into the hands of justice, to be tried for the murder of Sir John Eastlake. Some cried, "Who could have thought it?" whilst others declared "they were not in the least surprised; as, though of course it was a delicate thing to mention, they had had their suspicions all along. Lady Eastlake, who was dying, held up her hands, and prayed to God to spare her life, till the news reached her

that sentence was pronounced upon him; and Nelly, who was glorious, undertook to answer for it that he would. There was humble rejoicing and thanksgiving in Farmer Graham's cottage; and Hannah ventured to lift up her head a little, bowed as she was to the earth, by the consciousness of the evil she had done, and the conviction that she had lost Geordie's esteem for ever. How Miss Grieves ran about from house to house, and gossiped, and triumphed over everybody that had refused to listen to her hints, may be imagined; and how the wise and the charitable pitied and lamented, and forbore to make up their minds on the subject till they heard more, may be imagined also. On the whole, however, there was a considerable prejudice against Mr. Rivers, founded chiefly on one circumstance, and that was, his having offered so large a reward for the apprehension of William Bell; which, seen by the new light thrown upon the case, certainly did appear a dastardly deep-laid scheme to turn suspicion from himself, and fix it on another—on one who now appeared to be innocent, and whose life was to be sacrificed to his own security; for, as Lady Eastlake had always said, and, as she still re-

peated, "the supposed criminal once executed, there would have been an end of all inquiry." This did him more harm in the opinion of the world, than any other circumstance at present known, and led a vast number of people to jump at the conclusion of his guilt at once; "for," said they, "a man capable of doing such a thing as that, would do anything!" Forgetting that, till it was proved he was himself guilty, it was impossible to decide how far he was justified in seeking the apprehension of the universally supposed criminal, the complexion of the act depending altogether on that circumstance. But few people trouble themselves with the logic of their conclusions; and nonsense, however easily refuted, very seldom *is* refuted till it has done its allotted portion of mischief, and inflicted its allotted portion of pain. Miss Grieves, too, who always got deeper into people's misfortunes and faults than anybody else, whispered about, that she had heard from the very best authority, that Mr. Rivers had confessed his guilt to the magistrates; and this was repeated from mouth to mouth, till all traces of its origin were lost, and it was handed on its way as an established fact.

But, alas, who shall describe the wretchedness that prevailed within the walls of Eastlake Castle! What sighs—what tears—what exclamations of wonder and despair! The agonized wife—the weeping daughters! They who thought they had passed the fiery ordeal of woe, and had reached their rest to be disturbed no more by storms of fortune, to find themselves suddenly plunged into such a depth—such an unfathomable depth of misery!

"Where shall we hide our heads now!"

Not that they believed Mr. Rivers guilty, but the world believed him so; and whilst it did, they were held to be the wife and children of a murderer; and the judge might pronounce him so, and then they would have to live and die under the stigma. And then their grief for the unhappy cause of all their woe was intense. They loved him so much that they could only wonder and lament, and arraign the perversity of fortune; they never could find it in their hearts to blame him, still less could they abandon him. Mrs. Rivers declared her intention of going immediately to York, and taking a lodging near the prison. She recommended her daughters to remain at home, but they would not hear of it. So they

all removed together, accompanied by Elias, whose devoted attachment had now again become invaluable; not that they had slighted it in their prosperity; quite the contrary, they had done all they could to evince their gratitude and acquit their debt, and now they were well repaid for their kindness. The certainty of his regard, and the degree of intimacy at which they had arrived with him, rendered his presence and his services welcome, which was not the case with those of any other person, Russell excepted, and Russell was employed elsewhere. He had accompanied Mr. Rivers to the magistrates, been present at his examination, and was now occupied in preparing for his defence; whilst, on the other hand, Lady Eastlake's lawyer, Mr. Craven, was equally busy in gathering evidence against him.

But the task of both was extremely difficult, from the circumstance of there being so little evidence to be obtained on either side, as to the actual perpetration of the crime. That Mr. Rivers was the person who had spent the night at the "Cat and Bagpipes," was easily ascertained. No sooner was it known that he was in custody than plenty of persons were found who were able to give evidence on that

subject. The coachman, who had set him down at the door, the ostler, and chambermaid, all remembered the circumstance, and had since found out who he was, although they had not chosen to say anything about it. Then it appeared that two or three people, belonging to the village of Calderwood, had seen him when he was walking about; the blacksmith and the tailor among the rest. They said they should probably not have remembered the circumstance, as they had supposed him at the time to be some gentleman on a visit at Sir James Dalton's, had they not recognised him afterwards as the master of Eastlake—then the coincidence struck them. Next came two or three labourers, who had seen him walking backwards and forwards in the road, as if he were waiting for somebody; and another had seen him close at hand at the time Sir John Eastlake quitted his horse and turned into the wood; but having looked away for a minute, he had lost sight of him, and he could not positively say whether he had followed the baronet, or had turned into another road. Having reached this point, Mr. Groves was applied to, to know whether he had observed him; but he positively denied

having done so. Jem, the groom, who had taken away the horses, remembered perfectly seeing him; but having left that part of the country soon after, he had never been aware who he was, and had, therefore, thought no more on the subject. His impression was, that he had gone into the wood, but of that he was not certain.

Amongst those who had a tale to tell, were Mrs. Wood and Mrs. Fitzhugh. Mrs. Wood had not only been requested to wait for her rent, till Mr. Rivers had accomplished some enterprise he was gone about, but she declared that whilst Mrs. Rivers and her daughters were lodging at her house, happening one day to hear her own name mentioned as she passed their room, the door of which was open, she had distinctly overheard Mrs. Rivers tell her daughters that their papa was gone into the country to do something, which, if he succeeded, would make them as well off as they had ever been, and better too; and that when the young ladies asked what it was, she had bade them not inquire, and said she ought not to have mentioned it, as her husband had desired her not to do so; and Mrs. Fitzhugh affirmed that Mrs. Wood had called on her as

she went down stairs, and related the circumstance, adding that she had thereupon, herself, gone up stairs to listen if they were still talking on the same subject; but she had found the door shut. Mrs. Wood told her afterwards that she was sure they had suspected some one was at the door, and had shut it on that account. It appeared also that after he had left "The Cat and Bagpipes," on the day of Sir John Eastlake's death, Mr. Rivers had proceeded to Liverpool, where he put up at an obscure inn, and had remained upwards of a month. With respect to what had been his object in going there, or what he had been doing during his stay, nothing satisfactory could be ascertained. The people of the house he had lodged at, said that they never could observe he was doing anything, except that he took long solitary walks, and was eager to see the newspapers. They had frequently wondered what could have brought him there, as he seemed to have no business in hand. But the most unfavourable circumstance of all was the purchase of the pistols, which, when the thing came to be the subject of general conversation, a certain gunsmith recollected having sold to a gentleman answering the description

of Mr. Rivers, on the very day before Sir John Eastlake was shot; a hint, which being followed up, elicited the fact, that immediately after his interview with General Elwes, at Ford, he had provided himself with the pistols at the town where he mounted the coach which took him to the neighbourhood of the Castle.

These various particulars constituted nearly all the criminatory evidence that could be collected against Mr. Rivers, and although by no means decisive, one thing might certainly be affirmed of it, that taking every circumstance into consideration, the presumption of guilt was much stronger against him than against William Bell.

To oppose to this adverse testimony, he had nothing whatever but his own story.

"The truth is," he said to Russell, "I quitted London with the determination of leaving nothing unattempted to relieve my wife and daughters from the painful situation to which my own folly and vice had reduced them. I knew very well what sort of treatment I had to expect from my wife's uncle, General Elwes, and I expected to meet with no better from Sir John Eastlake, to whom I had made up my

mind to apply, should my first experiment fail—as it did, signally. The General saw me, because the last thing on earth he expected being a visit from me, the servants had no orders to deny him; but he insulted me, and declared distinctly, that, as long as I lived, his niece and her daughters might starve for anything he cared; he never would hold out a finger to assist them. Then I started for Eastlake, but as I knew Lady Eastlake to be my most implacable enemy, and as I believed it was through her influence that the various advances I had made towards a reconciliation with my cousin had failed, instead of going directly to the Castle, I stopped to make inquiries in the neighbourhood, that I might learn whether Sir John and his mother were at home, and who was with them. The information I received, that he was at Calderwood, and that Eastlake was full of visitors, induced me to form a plan of waylaying him on his road home, a scheme which possessed the double advantage of giving me a much better chance of success, as he would have no time to consult his mother, and also relieved me from the apprehension of running against anybody I might not wish to see, which was very

likely to happen, had I either gone to Eastlake, or to Sir James Dalton's."

"Good God!" cried Russell, "what an unfortunate combination of circumstances! and did you see him?"

"Yes, I did," replied Mr. Rivers, "and spoke to him. I followed him into the wood, and addressed him. As we had not met for years, he did not know me at first; but when I explained who I was, and my errand, he behaved in the most friendly and generous manner, and I easily perceived that all our estrangement and misunderstanding had been owing to his mother's influence and misrepresentations. He even invited me to accompany him to the Castle, but this I declined for many reasons; so, having arranged where he should direct to me, I left him, and returned to the inn where I had passed the previous night."

"But stay," said Russell, "if you saw him in the wood, and spoke to him, how was it that Mr. Groves did not see you?"

"He did see me," replied Mr. Rivers.

"But at the trial he said he saw nobody," returned Russell.

"That is a thing I do not understand," replied Mr. Rivers. "I have never compre-

hended why he did not at once avow at the inquest that he had seen me."

"Did he know you?" inquired Russell.

"Perfectly," answered Mr. Rivers. "He lived with me as under-footman when he was quite a lad. I believe it was the first service he was ever in; and the only way I can interpret his silence is, that he has been actuated by an unwillingness to bring me into trouble."

"That must be the case," replied Russell. "But to return to your story,—what was it took you to Liverpool?"

"The news of my cousin's death, which overtook me just before I reached London. Amazed and confounded at such an unfortunate coincidence—for I immediately saw the extent of my own danger—my first impulse was to return immediately to the spot, and present myself before the magistrates for inquiry and investigation; but when I reached York, and learned by general report that my name had not been mentioned at the inquest, and that no doubt was entertained of the crime having been perpetrated by the two young men who had absconded, I altered my mind. I thought it would be needlessly placing my-

self and my family in a very painful situation, and so I crossed over to Liverpool, where, being a large place, I hoped to escape observation, and where I resolved to wait a few weeks till I saw the course affairs were likely to take."

"Well," said Russell; "but — but the pistols? How came you to provide yourself with arms?"

"Why, the pistols," replied Mr. Rivers, "I frankly own, were intended to blow out my own brains, provided I had failed in my second application. I knew, if I were once out of the way, General Elwes would have adopted my wife, and provided for my daughters. He has no family, and she is his natural heir; but as long as I live, he never will forgive her marrying a gambler. It was my last resource; and the only means left me of saving them from utter poverty and starvation, if Sir John Eastlake had refused to assist them."

"Never!" exclaimed Russell, "never was there a chain of circumstances more unfortunately combined to make an innocent man appear guilty!"

And as all these circumstances gradually

disclosed themselves to the world, that Mr. Rivers *was* guilty, became the nearly universal opinion.

"Well he might look nervous and wretched!" said they. "What a life he must have led with such a sword hanging over his head!"

CHAPTER XLI.

"Denn hier ist meines Bleibens länger nicht."
GENOVEVA.

"Love your lord
No worse than I; but if you love so well,
Alas, you may displease him!—so did I."
MAID'S TRAGEDY.

THERE was another person amongst the audience at William Bell's trial, in whom the events of that day produced a great revolution, and that person was Peggy Bland.

"Bien, mon enfant!" said Mr. Mirliflor to her, as they rose to leave the court, "il est sauvé, ton ami, je crois—he is no more in danger, Monsieur Bell."

"Thank God!" said Peggy. "I always knew he was innocent."

"You happy now!" said he, patting her cheerily on the back.

But Peggy making no answer, Mr. Mirliflor stooped and peeped under her bonnet, in order to see how happy she looked; but instead of the smiling face he expected, he beheld one bathed in tears.

"Comment!" said he; "tu pleures? You cry now? What for?"

"Let us go home," said Peggy. So home they went; and, being there, Peggy threw off her bonnet and shawl, seated herself upon a low stool in a corner of the room, and burying her face in her lap, gave way to a passionate burst of tears.

"Mais, mon enfant!" said Mr. Mirliflor, in an expostulating tone, after contemplating her in silence for some minutes. "Mais, c'est la joie, peut-être? You cry because you glad?"

But Peggy shook her head. "What for you cry, then?" inquired the old man, approaching her, and putting his arm tenderly round her neck.

"Because," sobbed out Peggy, without raising her head—"because I shall never see him again."

"Comment! Mais, oui!" replied Mr. Mirliflor.

"No, no; never—never!" sobbed Peggy.

"Pourquoi? Why?" inquired the old man.

"I couldn't," answered Peggy. "I know now how he must hate me!"

"Hate you?" cried Mr. Mirliflor. "Pourquoi?"

"Yes," replied Peggy. "I should be ashamed to see him again now I've seen *her*."

"Comment!—seen her?" inquired Mr. Mirliflor; "c'est sa maitresse? Mais elle n'est pas plus belle que toi."

"Oh, but she's different," answered Peggy. "She's far above me, I can see that. I know now why he despises me."

"S'il te méprise, c'est qu'il a le cœur dur," replied Mr. Mirliflor.

"He shall never see me again," said Peggy. "I wont trouble him any more with loving him. We'll go away, father, somewhere else, as soon as you please; to-night if you like."

"Mais tu t'en repentiras, mon enfant, je crains. You vex now; mais allons! ce n'est rien; you change you mind."

"No," returned Peggy; "let us go. I

know he has no pity, and that he hates me, because I love him. Men are so, I suppose; and he can't help it. When I am gone, perhaps he wont think me worth hating any longer."

"Well, we'll go," said Mr. Mirliflor. "Perhaps it's for the best—loin de lui, tu seras moins malheureuse."

"I was very happy in London," replied Peggy. "All I wanted was to be near him, and see him, and to hear him talk; but I know that can never be again now. As soon as he is out of the prison, they'll be married; and to please her, he'd treat me with more scorn than ever,—so it's best we go at once."

"Où? Where shall we go?" inquired Mr. Mirliflor, who saw the probability of Peggy's fears being realized if they remained there.

"Anywhere; it's all the same to me—only, I can't sing any more; perhaps I'd better go away by myself, for I shall be of no more use to you now."

"C'est égal," replied Mr. Mirliflor; "tu chanteras, ou non, comme tu voudras."

"William said, I must go to my parents, but I can't; and I shall tell Serjeant Lawson so when he calls, by and by. I should like

to see my father; but I can never go back to the regiment again—it would break my heart."

"Donc tu resteras avec moi," said Mr. Mirliflor, tenderly kissing her forehead.

"My mother wont care," replied Peggy; "and my father 'll know I can't help it."

"Nous voyagerons pour te distraire; nous verrons de nouveaux pays; ah! tu t'amuseras, et avec le tems, le bonheur te reviendra."

Peggy shook her head. "Did you see," she said, "how he looked at her whilst she was in the witness-box? I thought she wasn't going to look at him at all, for she kept her eyes turned away till they had done questioning her. I believe he thought so too, for he looked so anxious and miserable, till she turned her eyes upon him, and smiled; and then his face brightened up in a moment, and he looked quite happy. Oh, how happy she must be!"

"N'en penses pas, mon enfant!"

".I don't think," continued Peggy, after a pause, "that girls like me are ever born to be happy."

"Il n'y a pas de doute," said Mr. Mirliflor, "que pour une femme, d'etre douée d'une grande candeur, et d'une grande faculté

d'aimer, soit un grand malheur. Dans le monde, on s'en prévale; ou, on la méprise; car c'est le caractère des hommes de mépriser ce qu'ils ne comprennent pas. Rarement elle sera comprise; rarement elle rencontrera l'indulgence et la generosité; elle se trouvera seule dans la foule qui l'environne, et desarmée dans le milieu des gens qui sont armés de cap-en-pié. Non, mon enfant, je crains que tu n'est pas faite pour le bonheur dans ce monde-ci. Ah!" added the old man, smiling compassionately on his weeping companion, "j'ai quelquefois cru qu'il y a un autre, fait exprès, pour de bonnes filles aimantes, comme toi."

Whatever measure of consolation might be comprised in the above suggestion of the worthy Mr. Mirliflor's, we fear did not reach Peggy, by whom his French, to which he always had recourse when his thoughts were too big for his English, was yet but imperfectly understood; so she wept on, pouring ever and anon into his sympathizing heart—that heart so youthful in age—the unbearable burthen of her grief; which, but for the relief the participation afforded her, would have almost bowed her young head to the grave.

On the following day, they quitted York, Peggy having sent a letter to William apprising him of their departure; "for I can be of no use to you now," she said, "so I wont trouble you any more. Serjeant Lawson says you're sure to be acquitted; and he says the lawyers say so too, for that the innkeeper knows a great deal more than he tells. So good-bye, William, and God bless you! You'll never see me again, which, no doubt you'll be glad of. Serjeant Lawson says the officers are all for you, and never believed you were guilty; and that he's sure, as you've been so long in prison, they'll let you easy off the desertion. So you'll be married to Lucy, William, and be very happy, and never think more of poor Peggy; as, indeed, why should you? for I never was anything to you, I know, but a trouble; but now I shall trouble you no more—and perhaps I shan't trouble anybody long. So good-bye, William! I hope you'll be happy, let what will become of your affectionate Peggy."

CHAPTER XLII.

"Da cosa nasce cosa e il tempo le governa."

AMONGST the ungratifiable tastes that Elias Longfellow had been born with—ungratifiable because his poverty forbade their indulgence—was a taste for curiosities, such as gems, medals, antique rings and brooches, old armour, and so forth; and he never could pass a shop where such articles were exhibited, without stopping to stare in at the window, to look and long—for to purchase was beyond his means. In London, where the opportunities for this sort of enjoyment—for, barren as it was, it was still enjoyment to him—were to be met with in nearly every street, it had formed the chief recreation of

his leisure hours; but when he came to Eastlake, he had been out of the way of temptation, though not of gratification, for the house was enriched with many objects of vertu, and of more than one he had become himself the possessor, through the kindness of Mr. Rivers. When he accompanied Mrs. Rivers and her daughters to York, all these treasures and tastes were nearly forgotten; his mind was wholly engrossed with the care of alleviating their anxiety, and assisting them in their efforts to comfort the prisoner. Still, when he happened to be walking through the streets alone, an old-fashioned silver teapot, or a few coins, exhibited in a window, invariably arrested his steps; and as now, in consequence of the regular salary he received, he was not altogether without means, he occasionally ventured upon some humble purchase. In this way he was, one evening, tempted into the shop of an obscure pawnbroker, to inquire the price of some article that took his fancy, and whilst looking over the contents of the shop, his attention was attracted by a very handsome gun, that stood in a corner, so he took it up to examine it, and was surprised to find it engraved with the Eastlake crest.

"Where did you get this gun?" said he to the man. "Do you know who it belonged to?"

"No, sir," replied the pawnbroker; "but I'll sell it to you cheap, if you like; for I'm sure he that left it here 'll never come back for it."

"Why? How do you know that?" inquired Elias.

"'Cause," said the man, "it's my belief he stole it."

"Then you shouldn't have taken it of him," said Elias.

"That's very true, sir," returned the pawnbroker; "but you know it's difficult for us to tell always whether a man has come honestly by a thing or not. Many comes here as is in great distress and trouble, though, maybe, they're honest enough; and many comes to dispose of things that belonged to them in better days that's their own property, though it don't seem likely. One can't nab every man for a thief, that comes to one's shop with a wal'able article."

"But you admit you thought this man was a thief?"

"I don't know that I took much notice of him at the time," said the broker, prudently;

" but it occurred to me afterwards; but maybe I'm mistaken," said he, regretting that he had been so communicative. " I know nothing about him, and never see him since, nor before."

The truth is, it had occurred to the broker, from the curiosity with which Elias examined the gun, that he was desirous of purchasing it; and guessing, from the manner in which he had been bargaining for one or two trifling articles, that he was not very rich, he had been led by his eagerness to sell, to speak unguardedly. But Elias had no desire to possess the gun, it was merely the crest that had drawn his attention, and as so many families bear the same, he would have thought no more of the matter, had not the hint dropped by the man awakened his suspicions.

" Very possibly," thought he, " it is one of Mr. Rivers' guns;" for it so happened that, not long before, one of the gamekeepers, named Burnley, had been detected in destroying and selling the game, and had consequently been dismissed. He was a desperate man, and had sworn vengeance against Mr. Rivers for refusing to give him a character; and, some time after he had been discharged, it was

rumoured in the village, that he was still lurking about the estate, and poaching the game.

Amongst the services Elias was called upon to perform for the ladies, one was to go occasionally to Eastlake, to see how affairs were going on there, and to fetch them books, or whatever else they might happen to want from thence; and the next expedition of this sort he made, after the incident of the gun, he bethought himself of mentioning the circumstance to Gale, the head gamekeeper, who had been transported from Hillside, where he formerly presided over the hares and pheasants, to perform the same office at Eastlake. Gale, on hearing the story, said that he was not aware of any gun being missed, "At least, sir," he said, "I've not heard of such a thing since I've been here; but, maybe it's some old gun of master's, or of the late squire's, that has been given to some of the keepers, and they may have sold it.

"Very likely," said Elias. "I did not think of that; but it didn't strike me to be an old gun; I think it's a new one; and certainly it's a very handsome one. To say the truth, it struck me that perhaps it was some trick of Burnley's."

"It may, sir," replied Gale; "I couldn't say; but the first time I go over to York, I'll take a look at it."

Gale was a very honest, well-intentioned man, and Burnley had the reputation of being a great rogue; nevertheless, there was a certain sort of friendship betwixt them, arising out of old acquaintance and similarity of pursuit. Burnley was several years younger than Gale, who had taught him his business, and who, being soft-tempered and easy, could never find it in his heart to do his duty thoroughly, where his old friend was concerned. He knew very well, for example, that Burnley was poaching the game long before he was found out; and he knew now, that so far from having left that part of the country, as he had himself industriously given out, that he was still hanging about, living by dishonest means, concealed by day and thieving by night. Gale did his best to keep him off the domain under his own charge, and whenever he fell in with him, which sometimes happened, he expostulated, advised, and threatened; but he neither seized him, nor informed against him, as was his duty to have done; and unhappily, like the result of all

compromises with duty, the consequences were evil. Still he would have been very glad to get him away; he wished, in short, to save him and get rid of him; so when he heard Elias's account of the gun, he resolved to go and see it. Mr. Ball, the pawnbroker, although he had not yet taken all the fright he was destined to take, had yet so far repented him of his communicative fit, as not to be very anxious to exhibit it: he said he did not know whether he had it, he believed it was gone; at all events, it had been laid aside. It had been removed certainly from the corner where Elias had seen it; nevertheless, he contrived to fish it out of a medley of things in a back lumber-room, and it was at length produced. Gale recognised it the moment he set his eyes on it.

"How long have you had this?" said he.

"Several months," returned Mr. Ball.

"The man as owned it never brought it here," said Gale—"he'd no need for it; and there was plenty of people would have bought it if he'd wanted to dispose of it. Do you know the man as brought it? A blackish man, warnt it?"

"I don't know, I'm sure," returned Mr.

Ball. "I've something else to do, besides remembering whether folks as come here are black or white. A man need have a pretty good memory as could tell that, unless he booked 'em."

"It's Burnley, as sure as my name's Gale," said the keeper, to himself; "and if I can only frighten him about it, it may make him move off, which will be the best thing for him, and a great relief to me; for if he stays here, he'll get himself into a scrape, and perhaps get me into one too."

Gale had not much difficulty in finding Burnley, for he had a pretty good guess at his nightly haunts, so, throwing himself into his way, he told him of the danger that awaited him.

"Mr. Longfellow is going to mention it to Mr. Russell, the lawyer, and they'll find out all about it, you may depend," said he; "and such a thing as that, coming upon the back of other things, 'ull blow you up entirely; so, if you'll take my advice, you'll be off, afore they stir any more in it."

"They've got nothing to do with it; the gun never belonged to Mr. Rivers," said Burnley.

"I know that," replied Gale; "I know as well as you do who the gun belonged to."

"It belonged to the late squire," said Burnley.

"No it didn't," returned Gale; "at least, it did once, to be sure, but he gave it away, and the man isn't far off he gave it to, and they'll easy get hold of him, and make him prosecute you."

"Who do you mean?" said Burnley, looking surprised; "I always thought it had been Sir John's.

"No, it was Mr. Groves's," replied Gale. "Sir John gave it him the season afore last. Why, where did you get it?"

"To Mr. Groves?" said Burnley.

"Yes," returned Gale; "Sir John never liked the gun, and Mr. Groves never shot out of it that he didn't bring down his bird, so Sir John gave it him. But how did you get hold of it?"

"How!" reiterated Burnley, abstractedly. "Why I found it in the wood the day Sir John was shot."

"Mr. Groves left it there in the bustle, I suppose," said Gale; "but I wonder I never heard him say he'd lost it."

"Did he never say he'd lost it?" inquired Burnley.

"Never, that I heard," returned Gale. "He must have forgotten it somehow, for he was very fond of it,—not to speak of its value."

"And it's a Joe Manton, silver mounted, too," said Burnley.

"If he had missed it, of course he'd have come to me to know if I'd seen it," said Gale. "But he'll hear of it now; and if you don't cut, you'll be brought up for it."

"Humph!" said Burnley. "He's at her ladyship's, at Little Otterley, still—aren't he?"

"Yes, he is," replied Gale. "She's keeping him there till after the trial. But take my advice, Tom, and cut at once. If you don't, you know, I must interfere. If it had been any other man but yourself, he should have had a bullet through his back afore this, I can tell you."

"Well, you're an honest fellow, Joe, I will say that for you, and true to your old friends," replied Burnley. "Perhaps, if it was to do again, I'd be honest, too, for this here life aren't no great shakes; and maybe it aren't so pleasant as people thinks, as ha'n't tried it. Howsomever, it's too late to mend, now."

"No, no, Tom," said Gale, "it's never too late to mend."

But Tom seemed to entertain a different opinion, for he shook his head, and walked away with a desponding air, that moved Gale's good-natured heart to pity him, in spite of all his faults.

"Poor Tom! Poor fellow!" said he, to himself, as he looked after him; "it's all along of being crossed in love! He'd have been a different man if the squire 'ud never come betwixt him and Bessy Lee, and broke the poor girl's heart!"

Shortly after this, it happened that Henry Russell, who was labouring, though very unsuccessfully, to collect some evidence that might be more decisive against William Bell, or, at least, that might tend to exonerate Mr. Rivers, arrived at York, for the purpose of reporting to that gentleman the unsatisfactory result of his efforts; and, in the course of conversation, Elias took occasion to mention the discovery of the gun. Russell's mind, however, was, at the moment, too much engrossed with other matters to attend to the subject, nor would he probably have thought of it again, had not one of the tenants at Eastlake told

him to beware of Burnley; "for," said he, "sir, he has sworn to be revenged on the squire for turning him away, and refusing to give him a character; and I heard the other day, that he'd been saying that he'd got something to tell at the trial that would make folks stare, and that somebody 'ud swing on a gallows yet that never expected it. Now, sir, I'm sure he has nothing to tell that's true, for if he had, he'd have told it before; but as no doubt he wouldn't mind setting his oath to anything, true or false, there's no telling but he might cause you a deal of trouble, especially if Lady Eastlake was to get hold of him."

This piece of information brought to Russell's mind the story of the gun. If he could ascertain that Burnley had stolen it, he should probably find no difficulty in silencing him, as self-preservation would induce him to keep out of the way; so he resolved to inquire the address of the pawnbroker, and pay him a visit.

But the pawnbroker denied that he had the gun. "The man as left it here, sir, fetched it away only two days ago."

"What sort of man was he?" said Russell.

"I don't know, I'm sure, sir, replied the broker. "I didn't take no pertiklar notice on him."

"But you saw, I suppose, whether he was tall or short, dark or light."

"No, sir, I couldn't say as I did; there was a good many people in the shop at the time, and I handed it across the counter without looking at him."

"That's very extraordinary!" said Russell, incredulous.

"Lord bless you, sir, not a bit! We folks in trade is not like gentlefolks, as has got nothen to do but to mind other folks' business. We've got enough to do to mind our own."

"Well," replied Russell, "it happens to be my business, at present, to look after this gun, which I have a particular reason for wishing to possess. Come! I'll give you a good price for it, if you'll let me have it."

"Can't, sir," replied the pawnbroker, casting his eye carelessly out of the window, as if wearied by the useless perseverance of his visitor; "a man can't give what he ha'n't got."

"Well, I believe I know the man that sold it you," said Russell.

"He didn't sell it—he only pledged it, sir," answered the pawnbroker.

"At all events, I'll find it, I'm determined!" said Russell.

"Well, sir, you're very welcome, I'm sure, sir," returned Mr. Ball, quietly arranging his rings and brooches in a tray, and looking as if it were a matter of perfect indifference to him whether his troublesome customer found it or not.

"He knows more about the gun than he should do, that's evident!" said Russell, to Elias. "I have no doubt it's a gun that Burnley has stolen and pledged, and I'll not rest till I find out the truth, I'm determined!"

"Curse the gun!" exclaimed Mr. Ball, when his visitor had departed; "I wish I'd been hanged before I clapped my eyes on it! It's like to give me trouble enough if I don't get rid of it. Howsomever, I'll be even with 'em, and put it out of their reach whilst I can." So he went up stairs to a secret and sacred spot, where he was wont to hide articles that were likely to prove vexatious, and having taken the gun to pieces, he packed it in a box, and sent it off to Mr. Joseph Ball, his respectable brother, in London.

There's nothing like taking time by the forelock, and so thought Mr. Ball, when, on the following evening, there arrived another person to inquire for the gun, who was even more desirous of purchasing it than the last. The pawnbroker scrutinized him well before he ventured to answer, in order to ascertain if this were the party who had made the deposit. It was not at first easy to decide, for his hat was drawn over his eyes, and his chin was muffled up, and there was little to be seen of his face but his nose. As the weather was far from cold, the purpose of these coverings Mr. Ball naturally concluded was concealment, a precaution which rendered him doubtful whether it were not, indeed, the proprietor of this much-contested article; but still he had not asked for the gun as if it were his, nor had he produced the ticket, so the secure path was to affirm that the owner had redeemed it, a piece of information that seemed to strike very unpleasantly on the mind of the stranger.

"He has!" said he. "When?"

"Only a day or two ago," replied Mr. Ball. "You're the third person that has been here to inquire for the gun. What do you want with it?"

"The third person!" repeated the stranger.

"Ay!" said Mr. Ball; "there was one here yesterday. I'm tired of being asked for the gun; but it's off my hands, thank God, now!"

"What sort of person was here yesterday?" inquired the stranger. "Did he see the gun?"

"No, he didn't," replied Mr. Ball, "'cause it was gone afore he came. But," said he, for the deportment and anxiety of the stranger convinced him that he was in what, by the pawnbroker, was looked upon as *an interesting situation*, "I've a notion he was a lawyer, and I don't think he means to let it drop; so, if there's anything wrong about the gun, I'd have them as has to do with it look sharp."

"What sort of man was it that fetched it away?" said the stranger.

"I can't say, I'm sure," returned Mr. Ball, who thought it on all accounts best to adhere to his story. "I was busy, and I didn't take no note on him."

At this intimation, the stranger turned away with a feeling of evident disappointment and depression, insomuch that Mr. Ball's sympathetic soul was almost moved to call him back and tell him the truth. This was clearly

no lawyer trying to entrap him, but some poor devil in a scrape—a sort of person towards whom the pawnbroker felt himself instinctively attracted; "but then," thought he, "he might draw me into the scrape, too. Better leave him alone. Helping people out of their scrapes, is like helping them out of the water—in their eagerness to get out, they're apt to pull other folks in."

CHAPTER XLIII.

"Happy the man who, void of care and strife,
In silken or in leathern purse retains
A splendid shilling."

THE SPLENDID SHILLING.

"*Kite.* Gentlemen, I don't beat my drums here to ensnare or inveigle any man; for you must know, gentlemen, that I am a man of honour. . . . . Sir, will you give me leave to try this cap upon your head?

"*Costar.* Is there no harm in it? Wont the cap 'list me?"

RECRUITING OFFICER.

LADY EASTLAKE had always been very fond of Vincent Groves. He had been her son's favourite and confidant, was discreet and quiet, and had helped to keep other people so. If Sir John's amours raised discontents, as they would inevitably do sometimes—fathers and brothers would grumble occasionally—no one could apply the soothing system so skilfully as Mr. Groves. No one could so dexterously

manage, without hurting the feelings, or wounding the pride, to bestow some expiatory favour — a reduction of rent, the exchange of a farm, from a bad or indifferent one to a better, a bargain in which the injured party was considerably favoured; even sometimes, according to the circumstances of the patient, a douceur, a sum of money; and no one could so ingeniously argue the delicate-minded, when he had such to encounter, out of their scruples.

"Why refuse it?" he would say. "Refusal cannot repair the wrong, or restore what's lost; you only injure yourselves by this overstrained delicacy, not the person that has wronged you. Nobody 'll know it; besides, you're mistaken if you think other people are troubled with all these scruples. I could name those to you—only I make a point of never betraying these matters; but there are those not far off, that are in much better circumstances now than they would have been if they'd been as squeamish as you are, I can tell you,—and they were very right. Don't the highest in the land do it? Don't they go into a public court and ask for damages? What are damages but compensation? And why should you be prouder than they are?"

When once these arguments had prevailed, which they generally did, there would be no more rebellion from that quarter; the scruples, and the pride, and the fear of exposure removed, and the compensation accepted, Sir John was no more troubled. It did not follow that innumerable evils did not succeed; rankling spirits, disappointed hopes, blasted prospects; sometimes broken hearts, and sometimes corruption, vice, infamy, despair, and death. But these came not before his eyes, seldom reached his ears, and therefore they touched him not. The bitter tears mingled not with his food, nor did the groans of anguish disturb his pillow. He eat and slept well; Groves was an invaluable fellow! and the world wagged on as before.

Then Groves was unequalled at conveying a delicate message; so quiet, so careful to avoid observation, so grave, so friendly, so unconscious of harm, that-even the most modest young girl, one who had scarcely been soiled by a look, and who was only just beginning not to shrink from a wanton eye—was neither shocked nor repelled, scarcely even alarmed into a blush. There was no impudent wagging of the head, no leer of the eye,

no meaning smile, that sought boldly to penetrate those unrevealed imaginings that scarcely yet assumed the form of thoughts—to make himself a partner in her secret, and rudely tear away the veil that yet hung over the mysteries beyond—nor no lascivious pinching of the fingers, that, oh! worse than all! hinted, "maybe I may come after my master." All was respectful, decorous, and discreet; he helped them on the way to the devil, it is true, and pioneered them the road to ruin; but it was done with so much modesty and good taste, that after they had reached their goal, and repentance and desertion had succeeded to intoxication and flattery, no ill will or resentment were entertained towards Mr. Groves. He had done his master's bidding, that was all; and he had done it inoffensively and graciously, and that was an obligation; to which was appended the still greater one, of civility and consideration, when there was no further object to be gained.

Who would not like Mr. Groves? Everybody did but Geordie Graham, who, with his keen Scotch eyes, saw deeper into a millstone than other people; and his daughter Lucy,

who, profiting—rare instance!—by her father's sagacity, had learnt not to like him either.

But, indeed, there was much to like in Mr. Groves; he had an agreeable person, good manners, and good morals too, as far as he was himself concerned. He had no vices of his own, only an intense toleration for the vices of great people; but this was the fault of his education and early training, which he had not had force of mind or experience enough to correct. He was the victim of a weak mother.

The story of Gabriel Groves, the father, was rather singular. He was the son of a Scotch farmer, a respectable man, who gave his children an excellent education, as educations went in those days, and pushed them forward on the way to get their living honestly and creditably, as far as he could before he died. Young Gabriel was apprenticed to a cooper, a man in a very flourishing business, and was likely to do extremely well. However, a circumstance occurred that changed the whole complexion of his fortunes.

At the period of his father's death, he, that is, the old man, had been in treaty with a neighbour for an exchange of a certain portion of

their respective farms; but just as the bargain was concluded, and before any measures had been taken to fulfil it on either side, Gabriel Groves died. Now it happened that Mr. Little, the other party to the agreement, had heard reason in the interim to repent of the arrangement. A hint had been dropt in his ear, that the ground he had parted with would shortly be wanted by the government for a public purpose, and that what was called "a long price" would be given for it. Mr. Little was ready to cut off his hand that had signed the transfer, and was just thinking how he might creep out of the dilemma—a thing he did not despair of, as Gabriel Groves was not in the secret of the government plans, when he suddenly heard that Gabriel was dead. Nothing could be better timed; the tough old farmer out of the way, there could not be a doubt of his success. The old woman, his widow, would not care a straw for the exchange, and would indeed probably prefer not to be troubled with it. Mr. Little was so sure of this, that he ploughed and sowed the fields he had virtually parted with, and proceeded exactly as if they were still his own; in short, he chose to consider the bargain annihilated by

the death of one of the parties, and acted upon that persuasion; whilst Mrs. Groves, the widow, sick and in trouble, unable to attend to her affairs, left them to be managed by a friend, who knew nothing whatever of the transaction betwixt the two farmers. However, in process of time, the old lady recovered her health and her spirits, and with them her habits of activity and superintendence; and as, by that time, some rumour of the proposed government plans had got whispered abroad, she produced the agreement, demanded the fields, and was deaf and inexorable to all Mr. Little's arguments and efforts to make her relinquish her claim. Whereupon he, Little, finding himself completely in the wrong, lost his temper, and insisted upon going to law, notwithstanding his solicitor assured him he had not a leg to stand upon. Of course he was beaten; and having thus lost his fields, and his temper, and his money, and his cause, he had plenty of leisure to sit down and sulk over his misfortunes, and vow vengeance and eternal hatred against the entire Groves family, from old Gertrude herself down to the terrier puppy dog, whom he always enlivened with a kick whenever he came in his way. This was to a

certain degree refreshing, certainly; still it was but an inadequate relief to Mr. Little's feelings; but as in this country people are not permitted to injure their neighbour with impunity, it was for some time all the comfort that was to be got. But as all sorts of things happen, if people can only wait long enough, so did time in its circle bring about the opportunity for Mr. Little's revenge.

Amongst the curses which have been abrogated, and which we hope may never be revived, are press-gangs. All civilized human beings, except Frenchmen—and the exception, by the way, is an illustration of the aphorism, that "extremes meet," since the nation that prides itself on having attained the highest degree of civilization, prides itself also in retaining a passion fit only for the savage—but all other civilized human beings are beginning to perceive the folly, the wickedness, and what may be, perhaps, more effective with kings and governments who can afford to be foolish and wicked vicariously or collectively—the uselessness of war. The pages of a novel are not the appropriate place to dilate on the cruelty, the injustice, and the tyranny of the laws that authorized pressing men for the king's service,

and the horrible abuses which were allowed to prevail in their execution, although the misery, the crime, and the destruction, that they entailed would furnish histories far beyond fiction; but at present we have to do with young Gabriel Groves, the only son of the widow. He was, as we have said, apprenticed to a cooper, and coopers were liable to be pressed, although it was not legal to press apprentices. Nevertheless, in spite of the security his indentures afforded him, young Gabriel had a great dread of a press gang. He knew very well, for there were too many stories to prove it, that they cared very little for the law when they could evade it; and that when a man was illegally pressed, redress came so haltingly after the injury, that it was ten to one it ever overtook it at all. So Gabriel kept his eyes about him, and eschewed all resorts or recreations that were likely to lead him in the way of these detested myrmidons; but alas! their name was legion. They dropped down, or we should rather say, sprang up, for they certainly did not come from aloft—so suddenly, that scarcely any caution could evade them, nor was any nook safe from their invasion.

The tradesman with whom Gabriel worked, lived some miles from his mother, and occasionally he was allowed to visit her from Saturday night till Monday morning—a pleasure he esteemed highly; but in one of these excursions originated his misfortunes—at least, those circumstances that changed the whole tenour of his life.

It was on a fine Sunday afternoon, his mother was gone to evening service, and Gabriel, with a volume of sermons in his hand, strolled along by the shore—for the village was within a mile and a half of the sea—till he came to a favourite spot amongst the rocks, where a small promontory sheltered him from the wind, and there he seated himself to read.

He had sat some time, and was beginning to think he ought to be on his way to meet his mother at a friend's house, where they were engaged to drink tea, when his attention was attracted by the sound of voices on the other side of the rock; so when he rose from his seat, before walking away, he stepped forward to see who were his neighbours; but what was his horror at discovering a boat on the shore, a tender in the offing, and four ruffianly-

looking fellows, whose appearance bespoke their mission, upon the strand!

As Gabriel was dressed in his Sunday suit of black, and was rather a genteel looking young fellow, if he had preserved his presence of mind, the chances are that he would have escaped suspicion; but unfortunately his fears got the better of his judgment, and the moment he set eyes upon the enemy, he took to his heels and fled. The hint was enough for them, and no sooner did they see him run, than they set off after him. As, besides being swift of foot, he had some advantage of them when he started, he had a tolerably fair chance, provided he could put them off the scent; and this, by his knowledge of the ground, he presently succeeded in doing. He dodged, in short, till they lost him; whilst he, breathless and terrified, reached his mother's house, where, still bewildered with fear, he dashed past the astonished maid, who was standing at the door, and, rushing up stairs, hid himself under one of the beds.

Now, as ill luck would have it, it happened that at the moment of his performing this exploit, Mr. and Mrs. Little were just passing

the door arm-in-arm, in the course of taking their Sunday evening's recreation; and in his haste and confusion, he ran against Mrs. Little, nearly overturning her, and by the concussion, knocking her best bonnet all awry—a thing ill to be tolerated under any circumstances, or from anybody, but altogether insufferable from the son of one's adversary. So Mrs. Little went into a great passion, and by calling after the young man to ask "where his manners were?" and other pertinent questions of a like nature, she attracted the attention of the passengers, who stopped to see what was the matter; and also the neighbours, who came to their doors and windows for the same purpose. Thus, when the pursuing gang reached the street—where, but for Mrs. Little's clamour, there would have been nothing to guide them to one house more than another—they naturally made for the spot to which they saw general attention was directed; but as they were looked upon as every man's enemy, and every woman's too, who had husband, son, or brother, everybody who comprehended the case moved away, and avoided giving any indication of the refuge the fugitive had sought. But the opportunity of revenge thus dropped

into their mouths, was too much for the Littles. Past disappointment and present irritation got the better of honour, charity, and good nature, and they betrayed the boy; adding that he was a cooper, and therefore liable to be pressed, but omitting that he was an apprentice, and therefore exempt. They bought their revenge dearly, for the inhabitants never forgave them; but the consequence of it was, that Gabriel was dragged from under the bed, and in spite of his expostulations and representations, was forced down to the boat; and by the time his mother, who had been fetched by the distracted maid-servant, arrived at home, he was already on board the tender.

At first, she flattered herself that nothing would be so easy as to convince them that they had no right to press her son; so providing herself with the copy of his indentures, she took a boat and went along side to represent the case. But nobody would listen to her; at her tears and entreaties they laughed; and as for the indentures, they declared the commander was not aboard, and none of the rest of them could read.

The only resource that remained was, to apply to the authorities who had power to re-

lease her son; but these resided at some distance. When she reached the place, the office was shut, and being Sunday night, nobody was to be found. On Monday morning, she obtained the order she wanted, but when she arrived at home the tender was gone. Officials wrote, and redress was promised, but her son returned no more. The period of his apprenticeship had nearly expired when these circumstances occurred, and the affair lingered on till he was no longer an apprentice, and she had no hope or heart to pursue it further; so she sat herself down with her despair, and Gabriel went to sea.

But Gabriel's tastes were anything but nautical; he found the mode of life insufferable; and as he had fallen under a very harsh commander, it really was so. The only comforts he had, lay in the friendship and companionship of a young lad of his own age, a countryman, and as miserable as himself; and in the good will of an old fellow, a sail-maker, who was also a Scotchman, and who very sincerely compassionated his young compatriots.

As no man that had been pressed could have the slightest scruple at running away if he could, the two boys naturally dwelt much

on the possibility of such a desirable consummation; but not only was the exploit extremely difficult to be accomplished by one, but it was doubly difficult for two, and both agreed that to go alone, and leave the other behind, was out of the question.

But time and accident brought about the opportunity at last. Their ship was at anchor off Portsmouth, and one day they were both sent ashore to fetch water. As soon as they found they were to go together, they made up their minds to try their luck, and having before confided their wishes to their old countryman, they now made known to him their determination.

"Well, God speed you, lads!" he said, thrusting a shilling into Gabriel's hand; "here's all the siller I've got. I wish it was more, for your sakes; but ye maun e'en make the most on't."

One hint he had given them before, and a very useful one they found it, which was, that whenever they were about to attempt their exploit, they should put on two suits of clothes. This they did; and having reached the shore, the moment they were out of sight of the boat, they threw away their water-kegs, and fled.

That night they slept for two or three hours under a hayrick, having kept, all day, to the most obscure paths and by-ways, not even venturing to purchase a crust of bread or a draught of beer. By the following morning, however, they were so hungry, that the temptation to eat was irresistible; and great as was their peril, being dressed in sailors' clothes, they determined to risk an address to the baker of a village they discerned not far off. As all their pecuniary resources were comprised in the worthy sail-maker's shilling, they could not venture upon any more luxurious repast than bread; but on that they made a tolerable meal, the more satisfactory, that, being newly baked, it filled up the vacant space within at less cost than more substantial food might have done. When they had done, they offered their shilling, the man gave them change, and they went on their way; but they had not gone far when they were seized with terror at finding themselves pursued. Tom was for taking to his heels, and making a run for it; but Gabriel, who remembered how ill that plan had succeeded with him before, advised him to stop and shew no fear. The baker and the baker's boy were the pursuers; the shilling was a bad

one, and all they required was, that they would have the goodness to change it. But the request was more easily made than complied with.

"It's all the siller we had," said Gabriel. "We've no got so much as a bawbee besides."

"Hungry hounds!" cried the enraged baker, throwing the shilling in their faces, "what business have you to come to my shop, and get your breakfast at my expense? I wish I could pull the rolls out of your d——d Scotch stomachs!"

"I wish you could, I'm sure," said Tom, who was feeling rather uncomfortable from having too hastily filled his empty stomach with hot bread; "I'd sooner hae the shilling in my pouch, bad as it is, than the bread in my waim."

This speech of Tom's somewhat placated the baker, who, after a little more grumbling, contented himself with demanding back his change, as he could not get his rolls, and, bidding them take care they never crossed his threshold again, or they should make acquaintance with the constable, he left them to go their way.

"Cursed unlucky!" said Gabriel, giving the shilling a contemptuous kick with his foot;

"to hae but one shilling, and that a bad ane!"

"I dinna ken," said Tom, picking it up, and putting it in his pocket; "we've got a breakfast out of it, at ony rate; wha kens but we may get a dinner, too?"

"Eh mon!" exclaimed Gabriel, "you wouldn't try to pass it?"

"Why, what are we to do?" said Tom. "We must eat, you ken."

"Eh, mon, fie!" said Gabriel; "I did na think you'd do sic a thing as offer folks bad siller!"

"They've nae need to tak it if they dinna like," said Tom, who was of a waggish turn, and had been less seriously brought up than his companion. "At ony rate, there's nae use in flinging it awa; it'll no burn a hole in my pouch."

Gabriel was so unwilling, both from principle and fear, that any further use should be made of the shilling, that he prevailed against all Tom's arguments that day; but hunger brought him round on the next; so, seeing a respectable-looking woman in a widow's cap, behind the counter, in a shop where bread, biscuits, cakes, and a small stock of confectionary figured in

the window, they entered, and asked for some twopenny rolls, which they immediately placed beyond the reach of accident, by depositing them where the owner had no chance of a recovery.

When the moment for payment came, the modest Gabriel turned his face from the widow and walked to the door; whilst the bolder Tom, with as much appearance of unconcern as he could assume, laid the shilling on the counter, prepared to act a scene of innocent surprise when its worthlessness was discovered.

But matters took a different turn to what they expected. The widow was unsuspicious, and instead of looking at the coin, she swept it into a drawer beneath the counter, and handed them the change. Tom blushed and took it, and giving Gabriel a push, they stepped from the door.

"You didna tak the change, did you?" said Gabriel.

"To be sure, I did," replied Tom. "How could I help it?"

"I'll hae nothing to do with it," said Gabriel. "It's a right-down robbery, and nothing else."

"But if I hadna took the change, man," re-

plied Tom, "it would hae been just owning we'd cheated her."

"But it's cheating her waur to tak her bread and her siller too," argued Gabriel. "Gie me the fourpence, and I'll tak it back to her."

Tom made a stout opposition to this proposal; "for," said he, "she'll most like gie us o'er to the constable, as yon baker threatened; and then who can tell but they'll find out we're runaways, and we shall be carried back to the ship."

But Gabriel was determined; he said Tom might go forward, if he liked, and get out of the way; but for his part, he would not stir a step on the road to London till the widow had her money again; so, as Tom would not desert his friend, they went back together.

"I dinna ken what to say," said Tom.

"Say nothing," answered Gabriel. "We'll just lay down the siller, and come awa."

"But suppose she stops us?" objected Tom.

"Well, it'll be time enough to think what to say when she does," said Gabriel.

But the explanation was more difficult than Gabriel had reckoned upon; and when the widow inquired what the fourpence was for,

the only answer he could think of was, that he believed there was a mistake.

"What mistake?" said she. "You gave me a shilling, didn't you?"

"I believe it was no a gude ane," said Gabriel.

"Wasn't it?" said the widow, opening the drawer, to examine her money. "Here is a bad one, sure enough. I never looked at it," and she handed it across the counter, evidently expecting they were going to give her another in exchange for it.

"We've no got any more siller," said Gabriel, casting down his eyes.

"Then what did you come back for?" said the woman, looking more surprised than angry. "Was it to return the change?"

"Yes," answered Gabriel, blushing with confusion. "We'd no hae gi'en you the bad shilling, but we were very hungry."

"Well," said the woman, good-humouredly, "I have taken many a bad shilling, but you're the first person that ever came back on such an honest errand."

"Well," said Tom, as they walked away, tossing the shilling into the air, and catching it again as it fell, "here she is again."

"Ay," said Gabriel, "but we wont try it ony more."

"Wait till your waim's empty before you say that," answered Tom; and betwixt their hard exercise, and their unsubstantial meal, they had not to wait long; by night they were desperately hungry.

As each wore two suits of clothes, they might easily have raised the wind by disposing of part of their wardrobe, but they did not know who they could trust, and were afraid of exciting suspicion by such a proceeding. However, as they were very tired, and sitting, as Tom said, cost nothing, they seated themselves on a tombstone in a churchyard, whilst they discussed their difficulties. Tom was very hungry, and very earnest to try what their shilling would do for them once more, but though Gabriel's stomach was equally persuasive, his principles were firmer, and he would not hear of it. So they argued the point for some time, quite unconscious that they had an auditor on the other side of a yew hedge, that separated the churchyard from the parsonage garden. There, with his book in his hand, sat the clergyman of the parish, listening to their discourse, from which he

gathered, not only the fact of their pecuniary embarrassment, but also some hints of their other perplexities; so presently, to their astonishment, he looked over the hedge, and bade them come round to his back door and speak to him—an order they obeyed betwixt hope and fear, uncertain what use he was going to make of the knowledge he had acquired. But they had no reason to complain of him on that score; after inquiring their history, which, finding him disposed to prove a friend, they ventured frankly to disclose, he gave them a hearty meal and five shillings, assuring them, at the same time, that it was the satisfaction he felt at hearing Gabriel's arguments on the side of honesty, that induced him to interest himself in their distress. Thus Tom was obliged to admit that "honesty was the best policy" after all, although it was not without some lingering regret that he consented to Gabriel's proposal of flinging away their "splendid shilling," which had certainly, as it turned out, done them very good service.

The five shillings served to provision them till they reached the neighbourhood of London, but then it was that their situation became most critical. In the great city, they

well knew, there was no concealment for them; pressmen were to be found in every direction ready to pounce upon their prey, and to attempt to pass through the streets or enter a public-house in their present attire, was almost certain destruction. But how to get it changed was the difficulty.

They were pondering this dilemma, when, suddenly, in a lonely part of the road, their ears were assailed by a piercing scream, which, on looking about, they perceived to have issued from a woman at some little distance, who appeared to be standing in an attitude of horror, looking into an old gravel pit, which, on a nearer approach, they found to be half filled with water, forming a very dangerous and inaccessible pond; and, as the sides of the pit were very steep, it seemed to be of no use whatever but for people to fall into. At the moment of their arrival, the poor woman, in a state of distraction, was trying to descend into the pit, for the purpose of endeavouring to save her little girl who had fallen into the water, a feat she had no chance of performing successfully, whilst there was very considerable danger that she would sacrifice her own life in the attempt.

Tom was a good swimmer and very active, and in the twinkling of an eye he stripped off part of his clothes, and was letting himself down to the water, from which he soon extracted the child; whilst Gabriel, in the meantime, assisted the grateful mother to recover her footing again on terra firma. When the child was brought up, however, it was insensible, but here their sailor's lore came to their aid. They had seen the surgeon of their ship restore more than one drowned person, and they soon had the pleasure of placing the revived child in its mother's arms. She told them it had strayed away from its home, which was at some distance, and she had been seeking it for a considerable time; and that as soon as it heard her voice, and saw her approaching, it had run away from her in sport, and not observing what was before it, had fallen into the pit.

Then succeeded her gratitude; they must come to her house and rest, and take something; they must see her husband, and receive his thanks for their services, and they were too much in need of a friend to decline the offer.

The husband proved to be a blacksmith—a

fine, athletic, cheerful-looking young fellow, who, as an acknowledgment of the obligation he owed them, straightways invited them to take some refreshment at a neighbouring tavern, a proposal they were afraid to accept; and, as they had been fortunate enough to establish an indisputable claim on his good-will, they ventured to confide to him their situation; whereupon, he gave them his hard, honest hand, and bidding them make their minds easy, he conducted them up stairs to a loft that was over his forge, and having provided them with clean straw and made them as comfortable as he could, he lost no time in furnishing them with a good meal of bread and cheese and ale; and then they sat down to consult what more he could do to promote their safety and forward them on their journey. The grand object to be effected was a change of dress, as, were they but once attired in plain clothes, they did not contemplate much difficulty in getting through London; and this important service the blacksmith undertook to perform for them. Under the pretence that they were the clothes of a relation lost at sea, he contrived to dispose of their four suits, and to obtain in exchange two suits of plain

clothes, and a little money, over and above, to help them on their way.

Thus provided, and having remained in the loft till the following afternoon in order to recover their fatigue, they started again, in excellent spirits, and with little doubt of bringing their adventures to a successful termination.

As evening was drawing on when they entered the city, they lost no time in looking about for a house to which their friend the blacksmith had recommended them, where they might pass the night.

Being strangers in London, however, they found it necessary to inquire their way, and, for this purpose, they addressed themselves to a man who was leaning against a post, at a spot where four roads met, and seemed to be idly staring about him in all directions. The stranger told them that the house they were in search of was at a considerable distance, at the same time begging to recommend one, with which he was acquainted, nearer at hand; but as the blacksmith had warned them that they would be more liable to danger in some houses than others, they resolved to adhere to the one he had indicated; which, when

the stranger found, he was so obliging as to escort them all the way. Indeed, he carried his civility further, for, having conducted them to the door, he was so unwilling to part with them, that he accompanied them into the tap-room, and calling for a glass of ale, he seated himself at the same table, and entered into conversation. At the next table sat a serjeant of dragoons alone, gravely sipping a glass of brandy and water, saying nothing to anybody, and apparently paying no attention to anything that was going on.

In the meantime, the stranger waxed more and more communicative and agreeable; and at length, having ascertained, in the course of conversation, that the young men had never seen a play, he said, if they would wait there for him, he would step to a friend in the neighbourhood, who would probably be able to give him a couple of tickets for the Surrey Theatre, which should be very much at their service.

He had scarcely left the room, and they were just beginning to expatiate on his obliging disposition, when the serjeant, who had been sitting at the next table, took up his

glass, and transferring it to their table, seated himself in the stranger's place.

"Now, my lads," said he, taking out a couple of shillings, and pushing one towards each of the young men, "there's the king's pictur' for you, one a-piece, and what I advise is, that you take it up and put it in your pocket, and the sooner you do it, the better it will be for you."

"But we don't wish to 'list, sir," objected Gabriel.

"I'd scorn to wish any man to serve his Majesty against his will," returned the serjeant. "A soldier 's a gentleman, and ought to be proud of his profession. If you don't like my coin, why after we've talked the matter over, you may give it me back again; I wont force you to keep it—meantime it's yours, and keep your finger on it, for it's a pretty pictur', and worth more than you are aware of."

At this assertion the young sailors each took up his shilling, to examine if it were actually only a shilling, or if it appeared to have any value they had not discovered.

"Now," continued he, drawing some pence from his pocket, "on this here coin there's the

pictur' of Britannia, what rules the waves; on t'other there's King George, what rules the land. Now I ax you, as impartial gentlemen, which is the prettiest figure of the two, and which a man of any taste would rather serve."

"Why," said Tom, "if I was obliged to serve one or t'other, I'd choose the old gentleman, certainly."

"So would I," said Gabriel. "There's nothing like terra firma."

"I'm glad to hear you say so, my lads!" said the serjeant, looking over his shoulder at their quondam friend, who just then entered the room, accompanied by two persons of very uninviting aspect. "I'm very glad to hear you say so. Depend on it you've made a good choice; and upon that we'll take a glass to his Majesty's health. But here's the gentleman, your friend, and I perceive he has brought the tickets he went for with him."

"Those are your men," said their amiable friend, pointing to the two lads; and addressing himself to the persons that accompanied him, who immediately advanced to seize the astonished youths.

"Hold!" said the serjeant, rising and interposing himself betwixt the two parties, with

an air of considerable dignity; "these two gentlemen have each done me the honour to accept his Majesty's likeness on a small piece of silver; and let me see the man that dares to lay a finger on them!" Whereon Gabriel and Tom, who, as the phrase is, immediately "twigged," each gravely exhibited his shilling to the discomfited pressmen, who, after a reasonable degree of swearing and abuse, were obliged to retire without their prey.

"Fair play," said the serjeant, when they were gone, "is a jewel; and it goes agen my blood to see men treated as slaves and niggers in this here free country. I knew what that 'ere chap was arter, directly I saw you come in together. He makes a trade on it, and has gudgeoned many an honest young fellow with his d——d civilities. But now, my lads, is your time to decide. If you take my advice, you'll keep the king's likeness, and serve his Majesty like gentlemen, where you'll be treated as such, and get a handsome bounty into the bargain, instead of being nabbed like felons, and clapt into a floating jail. And though I say it that shouldn't say it, a finer body of men, or better mounted, than his Majesty's fifteenth, there ar'n't in the service. But if

so be you don't fancy my proposal, why there's no harm done—I'll take back my money; but if that's your determination, I recommend you to be off out of this as fast as your legs can carry you, or you'll be whipt up, and find yourselves afloat before this time to-morrow, or my name's not Sam Hardy."

Who could resist such recruiting as this? The two young Scotchmen had had experience enough of one service; anything appeared to them better than that; so they pocketed "the king's pictur'," as the serjeant called it, and consented to try the other.

CHAPTER XLIV.

——————"Velocius ac citius nos
Corrumpunt vitiorum exempla domestica, magnis
Cum subeant animos auctoribus."

"Les hommes ne savent pas le mal qu'il font, et la société leur persuade que c'est un jeu, de remplir une âme de bonheur, et d'y faire ensuite succeder le desespoir."—DE STAEL.

"But arts we know not, nor have any skill
To feign a sour look to a pleasing will,
Nor couch a secret love in show of hate;
But if we love, must be compassionate."
TU QUOQUE.

IT is not our intention to pursue the fortunes of the young Scotchmen further than to point out how these circumstances, which, contrary to his wishes and his original destination, made Gabriel Groves a soldier, and ultimately threw him in the way of the woman he made his wife, influenced the fate and the character

of Vincent Groves, his son, who is more immediately connected with our story.

The regiment to which Gabriel was finally appointed was at that period commanded by the late Lord Belton, who, becoming attached to the lad, engaged him as his servant, and after some years bought his discharge, when he himself quitted the service. The first use Gabriel made of his liberty was to visit his mother, and the home he had left so suddenly, and never beheld since. But here all was sadly changed. From the time of his departure, his mother, who had persuaded herself she should never see him again, had gradually fallen into a desponding state, which had terminated in a degree of melancholy, which, though harmless, was not far removed from madness. Her affairs had, consequently, been neglected, till everything had gone to ruin; and as there appeared no prospect of her being able to conduct them more efficiently, a relation had taken upon himself to sell off what property remained, and by sinking the sum so produced, to ensure her a small maintenance for the rest of her days.

Finding he could be of little use to his mother, and being unfitted by habit for any

occupation he could find at home, Gabriel returned to the service of his former master, where he lost no time in falling in love with Lady Belton's maid, a pretty vain coquette, without either sense or principle. Gabriel married her, and an unhappy life she led him. To persons in her own condition of life she was indifferent enough, but she never could resist the attentions and flatteries of a gentleman. With her, rank and fortune covered all sins. The newly married couple were placed by Lord Belton in a small inn, close to the park gate; and here the thoughtless hostess was in the habit of receiving the homage of all the gay visitors that frequented the Castle. Whether her conduct was really criminal, in the sense to which the term is usually restricted, was a secret that remained betwixt herself and her fashionable admirers; but that it was so far criminal as to assume the appearance of guilt, and that it made her husband unhappy, and perverted the moral perceptions of her son, was past a doubt. From the hour of his birth she destined him for service; it being her private opinion, that there was no position in life so desirable for a man who had his living to earn, as that of the confidential valet

of a person of rank; always provided he were rich as well as exalted. The privileges and the comforts appended to the situation, together with the profits and perquisites to be made out of the vices and follies of the patron, were her constant theme; so that the object of Vincent Groves' ambition being early decided, his thoughts and her education were all directed to the same end. He was not by nature viciously inclined, but he neither hated vice nor loved virtue; he only thought that persons in his own condition of life who strayed from the path of prudence, acted very inexpediently, and would inevitably mar their fortunes; whilst he looked upon certain peccadilloes and indulgences as the especial privilege and appendage of the great, which it was his business, as well as his interest, to serve and to foster.

Furnished with this code of morality, Vincent Groves entered the world, and certainly, for some time, he found no reason whatever to doubt its correctness, or its applicability to the purposes of his immediate benefit and ultimate advancement. He soon rose to the post he desired, and his merits quickly becoming known, if accident threw him out of one situation, he always found another open to receive

him, till, at the age of two-and-thirty, he entered the service of Sir John Eastlake, with whom, trusted and favoured, he had lived five years, at the period of the unhappy catastrophe that terminated the baronet's life.

Cold, calm, discreet, and calculating, as Vincent Groves was by nature and education, there was yet one warm spot in his heart—one affection that amounted to a passion—one object whose interest and welfare were dearer to him than his own, and this was his sister. She was the youngest child of a large family, of which he was the eldest, and there were nearly twenty years between them. Her mother had died shortly after her birth, and she had grown up under her father's eye, a beautiful, and somewhat delicate girl, the delight of her father, and the pet of her brother. The other children had all died in youth or infancy, and Fanny and Vincent being the only survivors, the old man was very unwilling that she should leave him; but Vincent's prejudices in favour of service ran high, and he advised her not to shut herself up for ever in the Belton Arms, but to go out and see the world, where, with her pretty face, she could not fail to make an advantageous marriage;

and as, through his affection and liberality, she had been provided with a good education, he easily procured for her the situation of nursery governess in the family of Lady Morton. Her charge was not heavy, as it consisted but of one little delicate girl, whose health was so precarious, that she was allowed to learn nothing beyond the rudiments of reading, whilst the greatest part of every fine day was spent in the open air, under the care of Fanny Groves. In London, Hyde Park, near which the family resided, was the spot selected for this exercise, and thither Fanny repaired daily with her pupil. Sometimes they strolled into Kensington Gardens, and when the child was tired they would seat themselves, and Fanny would read to her while she rested.

On one of these occasions a lady, who appeared to be a friend of Lady Morton's, advanced to speak to the little girl, whilst two gentlemen, who accompanied her, approached also, and, attracted by the pretty face of the governess, addressed their compliments and conversation to the fair Fanny.

Fanny had not been educated in her mother's principles, for her mother had died before she

was old enough to imbibe them, neither had she inherited the vanity and levity of her maternal parent; but she had, nevertheless, a very dangerous tendency for a pretty nursery governess—she had a strong turn for the romantic. She had been devouring the contents of the nearest country library ever since she could put words together; and the contents of a country library a few—at least, comparatively a few—years ago was usually a farrago of pestilent folly, as nauseous and wearisome to persons of sense and experience, as it was absorbing and intoxicating to those without either. Fanny had gone into the world with a mind stuffed with all manner of extravagances, and a strong persuasion that she was born to be a heroine. She wrote verses to the moon, which she called Cynthia, and had made some progress in a novel denominated "The Mysterious Footman," in which the footman marries the nursery governess, and turns out to be a nobleman, who had assumed that disguise for the sake of obtaining the disinterested affections of his mistress. But underneath this folly, which was the result of her misdirected reading, and of a rather weak mind, she had a susceptible heart and warm

affections, and she was therefore exactly calculated to become the prey of licentiousness, and the victim of her own feelings and imagination.

Of the two gentlemen that addressed her, one was elderly, and the husband of the lady; the other was in the prime of life, extremely handsome, with a decided air of fashion, and a thorough adept in that practised gallantry which, though it never can deceive but once, is infinitely dangerous to the inexperienced, when reinforced by the graces and refinements that rank and wealth bestow.

Fanny was very much struck by the elegant stranger, and she had the satisfaction of perceiving that he was equally struck with her.

Indeed, he took no pains to conceal it; and before they were beyond her hearing, she heard him expatiating in the most flattering terms on her beauty. "It's a sin such a creature as that should be a nursery governess!" were the last words that reached her ears as they retired, and he cast a lingering look over his shoulder as he said it, to make sure that she heard him.

Fanny thought a great deal of him—wondered who he was, and whether she should

ever see him again—wrote some verses to him, in which she declared her opinion that he was Apollo, or perhaps Love himself, who had put on that disguise to wound her heart; and she cancelled the description of the mysterious footman, and did him over again, after the exact pattern of the mysterious stranger.

In spite of all this, she was as much surprised as pleased, when, about the same hour on the following day, he approached her in the park, under pretence of speaking to the child. As he had not troubled himself about the child the day before, she could not fail to flatter herself that she had made more impression on him than she had reckoned upon; and, indeed, he did not long leave her in doubt upon that subject. Fanny listened to him with downcast eyes, and blushing cheeks, and a palpitating heart; she scarcely dare believe that he was serious—yet he seemed so, and stranger things had happened; at least, so she had read. As men who make gallantry the business of their lives soon acquire an instinctive sagacity, which enables them to distinguish between the various classes of character amongst the women they address, and to direct their battery accordingly—money to the interested,

splendour to the ambitious, flattery to the vain, and professions of true love to the guileless heart, the experienced stranger had no difficulty in accommodating himself to the taste of his auditor. As, when he asked her her name, she blushed and seemed unwilling to disclose it; he said, "What signified a name? He would call her Rosalind;" and as he was just as well pleased not to tell his own, he christened himself *Orlando*, whilst he declared his passion after the most approved fashion of the last new novel. What a sunbeam had fallen athwart poor Fanny's dull life now! Scarcely a day passed that she did not meet her lover, and listen to vows of eternal tenderness under some umbrageous tree, or lounging through the green glades or shady walks of the gardens. After a time, however, Orlando began to be dissatisfied with these arcadian pleasures, and urged his Rosalind to meet him elsewhere. But to this she would not listen. In the first place, she was never allowed to go out alone, nor indeed to go out at all, except with her pupil; and in the next, even had she had more liberty, she was herself perfectly satisfied with the intercourse they enjoyed; and although very much in love, was too

modest and well-disposed a girl to take such a step deliberately; and there is little doubt, but that as long as things went on in the same train, Fanny would have adhered to her resolution. But the interference of the world, which never can let Rosalinds and Orlandos alone, soon changed the character of the drama from the pastoral to the tragic. Fanny's little romance was not unobserved by the governesses and nursery-maids who, like herself, accompanied their young charges to the park; and through some one amongst them, who mentioned it to her own lady, it at length reached the ears of Lady Morton, who would have dismissed the offender immediately, had not the child, who was very fond of her, cried and screamed, and insisted on her staying. So, after a great deal of lecturing and threatening, omitting all that sort of judicious advice that might have prevailed, or the representations drawn from precedent and experience, that *might* have alarmed and convinced—though it is very possible they might not—she was ultimately permitted to retain her situation, on condition of a thorough amendment, and a promise never to allow the "strange gentleman," or any other gentleman to speak to her again.

Fanny cried and promised, and intended to keep her promise, hard as it was, for she knew that her character was at stake; and the next day she did her utmost to fulfil her word, by confining her walk to a part of the gardens in which they had never met. This plan answered for a day or two, but Orlando soon found her out, and insisted with all the authority of a lover on knowing why she avoided him, and then with uncontrollable tears she told him what had happened. Whereupon, he thanked Lady Morton in his heart very sincerely, for he understood his trade too well not to know that she had rendered certain and speedy, what might have been otherwise doubtful and protracted. The cards were in his hand, and he had nothing to do but to play them; so he immediately fell to arraigning the tyranny of Lady Morton, the cruelty of the world, and the perversity of fate; asked his Rosalind indignantly "if she had the heart to make him miserable, or if she loved him so little that she could consent to resign him in compliance with the wishes of anybody whatever?" for that if that were the case, he would take his leave of her at once, and whatever pain it might cost him, trouble her no more.

The poor girl cried and sobbed, and had a hard struggle with her own heart; but at length prudence and virtue conquered, and she said she must obey; she should lose her situation and her character, and then what was to become of her?

"Hadn't she a secure refuge with her Orlando? Wouldn't his arms be open to her? Should she ever want for anything that he could command? Why not fly to him at once?"

But Fanny could not make up her mind to do this. There was no word of marriage, and she feared no thought of it. But how could she hope this? Orlando was no doubt a nobleman—perhaps a prince,—at all events some very distinguished person—his air and manners placed his rank beyond dispute; besides, he rode beautiful horses, and she often saw him with two grooms behind him—she had once also seen him riding in Rotten-row with one of the royal family. The disparity being so great, how could she expect him to make her his wife? Probably he could not, even if he wished it—the great were often trammelled by considerations and conditions that put it as much out of their power to follow their incli-

nations as the poor. It would be selfish, interested, and base in her to insist on it. No; she must give him up, and never see him more—and so, with bitter tears, she told him. This he expected; it was but the first stage, for he was quite sure she could not keep her resolution, provided he afforded her the necessary facility for breaking it; so having expatiated on his own sufferings, and expressed his doubts of her affection, he bade her "farewell for ever!" adding, in a parenthesis, that if she relented and altered her mind during the next fortnight, a letter addressed to "Orlando, at the Post-office, Gerard-street," would find him. If he did not hear from her within that period he should relinquish all hopes, and should leave England for some years, for the purpose of recovering his spirits and endeavouring to forget her. He then went home, and bade his confidential valet call daily in Gerard-street, and inquire for a letter addressed to Orlando.

Poor Fanny went home too, but with a bursting heart, to think, and weep, and sigh—and think, and think again. How gloomily rose the sun on the day she was to see him no more! How should she live through it? And

the next, and the next, and all the dreary days to come? How happy she had been ever since her acquaintance with her adored Orlando! She had not known how happy, till now, that she learnt it by the bitter contrast. She wondered if he would have resolution enough to keep his word—he knew his game too well to break it—she hardly thought he could; she was sure she could not, were she in his situation, and at liberty to come or not, as he pleased. Her heart beat at the sound of a horse's foot, and her eyes wandered about in all directions as she trod the accustomed paths—but there was no Orlando. She sat down and wept. The child pulled her arm and bade her read to her, or talk, or tell her a story, but she could do none of these things—she could only weep. Her appetite and sleep forsook her; her duties became odious, her pupil an annoyance, life a toil, and everything insupportable. She dreaded to be seen, for she knew misery was painted in her face; if any one spoke kindly to her, the unbidden tears rushed forth, and choked her voice ere she could answer; and she trembled at the approach of Lady Morton, who stung her with contemptuous looks and angry words.

Was this anguish to endure for ever? Was there to be no end to it? Were all her future days to be like these—no rest but death?

Poor Fanny! she was young in sorrow; she could not believe that time could appease this agony, as by one process or another, it does all agonies—it kills or cures. At all events she could not wait—the present was past endurance—she must fly from it and brave the future; so, on the ninth day, she wrote to Orlando, to say that on the following evening she would quit Lady Morton's house, at eleven o'clock, if he would be in waiting to receive her near the door. As she could not receive a letter from him without danger of discovery, his walking before the house at a certain hour of the morning, was to be the signal that he would meet her at night.

"I know I am doing very wrong," she said, "and I don't know how my poor father and brother will bear it when they hear what a step I have taken—I never can see them again! They must forget me, and I shall have nobody in the world to love me and comfort me, but him who will be all love and all comfort to me if he is but kind. If I could only have been

allowed to see you *sometimes*, I could have been quite happy and quite contented; but to be separated entirely—never to behold you again—oh, I could not live! I never knew what happiness was till I saw my Orlando, nor misery till I was told I was to see him no more. But I *shall* see him. Oh, how my heart leaps when I think of it! I shall behold those beautiful eyes beaming upon me as they used to do, and hear that rich deep voice call me *Sweet Rosalind* again!"

As Orlando happened at that time to be lodging in a respectable hotel, where he could not decorously introduce a female who was not his wife, he bade his valet engage a lodging, in some retired street, for a lady, and also a servant to wait upon her.

"Everything must be ready by to-morrow evening. We shall be there about eleven o'clock."

Of course everything *was* ready, and at half-past eleven a coach stopped at the door. The attentive valet, who was on the alert, rushed forward to open it. His master stepped out, and handed out a lady dressed in black silk, with a close bonnet, and thickly veiled, who, leaning on Orlando's arm, passed in, never

raising her eyes or looking to the right or the left, but holding her veil down over her face as if she feared either to see or be seen. The maid stood in the passage and lighted them up stairs, the assiduous valet staying below to dismiss the coach before he followed. When he reached the drawing-room, he looked about for the lady, but his master was alone.

"She's gone up stairs with the woman," said he. "Shy—don't like to be seen—go off after a day or two. Of course I shall breakfast here in the morning. Now, bring the boot-jack, and shew me my dressing room."

CHAPTER XLV.

"Lord! would men let me alone,
What an over-happy one
Should I think myself to be;
Might I in this desert place,
Which most men in discourse disgrace,
Live but undisturb'd and free."

THE RETIREMENT.

"Vide etiam atque etiam quid agas."

AFTER this digression, the necessity of which will presently appear, we must return once more to Eastlake, and see what is doing there.

"Gale," said Mr. Groves, one day, entering the keeper's lodge, "could you tell me where I can see Burnley? I understand he's somewhere about the neighbourhood, and I want to speak to him."

"He's not very hard to find, for them as knows his haunts," replied Gale. "I saw him two nights ago."

"Did you? Where?" inquired Mr. Groves.

"Not far from hereabouts," returned Gale. "But what do you want with him?"

"Only to speak to him," answered Groves. "Where shall I be most likely to find him."

"Why, you see, Mr. Groves," said Gale, "Burnley's not what he should be, no doubt, and for my own part, I wish he was away from here, with all my heart. At the same time, I shouldn't like to get Burnley into trouble—he and I's old friends; and I wouldn't wish harm to come to him through me."

"I mean him no harm whatever," replied Groves. "On the contrary, what I have to say to him will probably be of service to him."

"Well," returned Gale, "I can guess what it's about. It's about that 'ere gun o' yourn, that he's been and pledged at old Ball's, the pawnbroker's."

This observation of Gale's, correct though it was, appeared to produce a very unpleasant effect upon Mr. Groves, who, changing colour and looking very uneasy, said, hastily, "How do you know it was mine?"

"Because I've seen it," returned Gale. "I went over to York last week, and as Mr. Longfellow had mentioned the gun to me, I called at Ball's, to look at it. I knew it was yourn the moment I clapt my eyes on it."

"Does Mr. Longfellow know it's mine? or anybody else?" inquired Groves.

"Not that I know on," replied Gale. "When he mentioned it to me, in course I didn't know whose it was; and I ha'n't seen him since I was at York."

"Then I think you had better say nothing more about it," rejoined Mr. Groves. "If it gets abroad that it's mine, I shall most likely be obliged to prosecute Burnley, which I don't wish, nor you neither. It will be better to hush it all up, and get him away from here."

"That's what I want," replied Gale; "and it's what I've been trying at some time; for if he stays here, he's sure to get into trouble, and 'ull maybe bring me into trouble too, for not laying hold on him."

"I'll point that out to him," said Mr. Groves, "if you'll tell me where to find him; and we must get the gun from him too."

"The gun!" said Gale, "he ha'n't got the gun, has he?"

"Yes, he has," replied Groves. "I happened to meet Mr. Longfellow, and he mentioned the gun to me, and told me you supposed it was some gun of the squire's that Burnley had laid his hands on, so I went to see it; but Ball said it was gone. The man that pledged it had fetched it away."

"The deuce he has!" said Gale; "he didn't tell me that. I wonder where he got the money to redeem it!"

"Stole it, I dare say," said Mr. Groves.

"I never knew him do such a thing as that," returned Gale. "Many a man 'ull take a hare or a pheasant, as wouldn't take gold or silver."

"I suspect he wouldn't be very particular," replied Groves; "he took my gun, you know."

"No, he didn't," returned Gale; "he says he found it in the wood, the day the squire was shot. Didn't you never miss it?"

"No," said Groves, "stooping forwards to brush the dust off his shoes with his silk handkerchief. "Not wanting it since, I hadn't missed it. But where did you say I should find him?"

"Why, by day, I believe he puts up at Joel Gapper's—you know where Joel lives—the

mole-catcher, I mean—but I don't say you'll find him, nor but what he'll get out of your way. At night, he's out about the preserves mostly; and I often know by his wires where I may look for him, if I want him."

"Well, I'll try for him at Joel's," said Mr. Groves. "*He* does a little in the poaching line, too, I fancy."

"Ay, ay," returned Gale, laughing, "birds of a feather, you know."

Mr. Groves waited till towards evening, and then he started on his expedition to the mole-catcher's. The path—or rather way, for there was no path—lay over a common, and the mole-catcher's hovel was hid in a little sandy ravine, betwixt some large boulders that looked as if they had tumbled down from the sky. The yelping of curs, and the trophies of weasels, moles, and ferrets, commemorative of glorious hunts, and of the more illustrious victims, whose conquest and capture were considered worth recording, which adorned the external walls of the dwelling, were quite sufficient to announce the profession of the owner, who, remote from the intruding world, enjoyed in this snug corner a degree of independence that might have contented a cynic,

and that certainly few persons, however splendid their income, have succeeded in attaining. No need had Joel Gapper of butchers, bakers, nor shoemakers. Tariffs were nothing to him; nor corn-laws, nor taxes upon leather; the malt tax was the only one he felt he had a right to complain of, but that he contrived to evade by confining his libations to spring water and smuggled gin; his tobacco he obtained through the same agency; tea and sugar he did not want; and the chief part of his apparel was manufactured out of skins dressed and prepared by himself, after a very superior method of his own. Thus, Joel contributed nothing to the support of the state; but then, on the other hand, he did that which has been pronounced the pride and the boast of an English peasant—he maintained himself by his own toil, without any assistance whatever. Behind his hut he had a little patch of ground on which he grew potatoes enough for his own use—and delicious potatoes they were, out of that dry, sandy soil—and nobody knew better how to broil them, or roast them with their jackets on, than Joel Gapper. He had quite a knack of it; and many a time had Sir John Eastlake, and other gentlemen of the neigh-

bourhood, after a fatiguing morning's sport, been glad to make a luncheon on Joel's potatoes, and a bit of fresh butter—which he got from the farmers' wives, in return for the good service he did them in destroying the vermin that sucked their eggs—washed down with a glass of "Joel's juniper," as it was the fashion to denominate the contents of the mole-catcher's leathern bottle. In exchange for this civility, the worthy Joel supplied his larder from their manors; and a very comfortable table he kept—abundant, luxurious, and wholesome. He was himself of opinion, that there is no food so congenial to the human stomach as game—at once light and nutritious, with, as he always enforced, the additional advantage, that you know where it comes from, and how it has been fed; and that instead of buying it out of a dirty butcher's shop, you have the benefit of the preliminary sport and exercise which promotes your health and your spirits, and provides you with an appetite to enjoy your repast.

Such were Joel's views of life, and such his practice; and it may therefore be easily conceived, that Burnley and he were congenial spirits, and that the mole-catcher's hearth was

a welcome refuge to the poacher. As Mr. Groves approached the hovel, a dim light that glimmered through the single window, served to guide him to the door; but the sound of voices within induced him to pause and listen, ere he demanded admittance.

"I know enough to know I've got a fever," said a peevish voice, "and that gin wont cure me."

"Then I don't know what will," replied another. "I think a man what can't be cured by good Hollands gin, pervided always he gets enough on't, has a d——d bad chance. I never was ill but what it cured *me*."

"It's doctor's stuff I want," replied the first voice, which Mr. Groves recognised to be Burnley's; "but I don't know how the h—ll I'm to get it."

"Doctor's stuff!" said Joel, "that's pison—I never got a penn'orth of anything but pison in my life out of a doctor's shop. I get something from 'em for the rats sometimes. I couldn't answer it to my conscience to give you doctor's stuff, if I'd a cart-load of it."

"A fellow' ud better be poisoned at once than be obliged to lie here upon straw, like a sick hound. Where are you going to night?"

"To Otterley to-night—to Calderwood to-morrow, so I shall have to be off early."

"It's blasted unlucky I can't go with you."

"If you'd only follow my advice, and take a good sup out of the leather bottle, you'd be on your legs by to-morrow morning, I wager."

"Leave me the can full of water before you go," said Burnley. "I'm as dry as a salt herring."

Here there was a pause in the conversation, whilst Joel appeared to be complying with the request of his guest, at the same time grumbling and muttering something about cold water sitting heavy on the stomach.

As the business Mr. Groves came about was strictly private, he was not sorry to find that, by a little patience, he could avoid seeing Joel at all; so he drew aside, and, placing himself out of sight, waited till he saw that worthy emerge from the hovel and walk away; then, when he concluded him out of hearing, he lifted the latch and entered.

"What now? What's brought you back?" inquired Burnley, imagining it was Joel that had returned.

"I'm sorry to see you so ill, Burnley," said Mr. Groves.

"Eh?" said Burnley, turning his head quickly, and then bringing his body quite round, for he had been lying with his back to the door when Mr. Groves entered, stretched upon straw, with a blanket wrapped about him. "Who is it?" added he, raising himself on his elbow; "is it you, Gale?"

"It's me, Vincent Groves," returned the unexpected visitor.

"Mr. Groves!" said Burnley, in a doubtful tone, as if he were uncertain whether to be sorry or glad.

"But what's the matter with you?" inquired Mr. Groves. "What keeps you there wrapt up in a blanket?"

"Why it isn't a little that 'ou'd keep me here, Mr. Groves," returned Burnley; "but I b'lieve I've got a cold or a fever, or some blasted thing or another. I'm all over aches and pains; and I like water better than gin, and that's a bad sign. I got a tumble into the water t'other night, and went to sleep in my wet clothes, and I b'lieve the cold's got into my bones; but I've done such a thing many a time afore, and never was a bit the worse."

"We grow older every year, you know,"

replied Groves; "and when people grow older, they should grow steadier, and not play such fool's tricks."

"Ah, it's easy talking, Mr. Groves, for them as is not put to it to make a living."

"I believe few people are put to it to make a living that are steady and honest," returned Mr. Groves.

"But it isn't everybody that can be steady and honest," objected Burnley. "A fellow has crosses in life, and temptations—and then he's turned off without a character—and what's he to do?"

"Endeavour to recover his character," replied Mr. Groves. "At all events, not do anything dishonest, which only makes his situation worse."

"I never did nothing dishonest," answered Burnley. "If you call snaring a few birds that's flying here to-day and there to-morrow, dishonest, why I'm sorry I can't agree with you."

"But birds are property as well as other things," said Mr. Groves.

"Then them as has 'em had better put a little salt on their tails, and keep 'em from flying," said Burnley.

"But, Burnley," said Mr. Groves, "I'm afraid that people that don't mind taking birds, are apt not to mind taking other things, if they happen to fall in their way."

"Well," said Burnley, in a half jocular tone, "there's a difference 'twixt finding and stealing, you know, Mr. Groves."

"Not in the eye of the law," responded Mr. Groves, gravely.

"Oh, the law!" said Burnley, somewhat contemptuously.

"If a man sells or pledges a thing he knows is not his own, what's the difference between that and stealing?"

"A great deal of difference, to my mind," answered Burnley.

"You'd find the judge wouldn't make much difference," returned Mr. Groves.

"Oh, the judge!" said Burnley, with the same accent of contempt he had spoken before, and casting a shrewd glance of inquiry into Mr. Groves' face with one eye, whilst he half closed the other.

"I came here as a friend, Burnley," said Mr. Groves.

"Well, I'm glad of it, Mr. Groves," said Burnley.

"It's not my wish to bring you into trouble, if I can help it," continued Mr. Groves; whilst Burnley, whose attention was now fully awakened, fixed his two keen eyes on his visitor's countenance. "I know you're in difficulties, and it's not my wish to increase them, if you are only willing to do what's right."

"What's that?" inquired Burnley.

"You've been playing tricks with a gun of mine that you picked up somewhere. I know I could prosecute you for it, and, perhaps, get you sent out of the country; but I've no desire to be hard with you; but you must give me back my gun."

"I haven't got it—it's at Ball, the Jew's, in town."

"It *was* there, I know; but you've got it now, Burnley; and you must give it up to me."

"I ha'n't got it, I tell you," answered Burnley.

"What have you done with it then?" inquired Mr. Groves; "I know you fetched it from Ball's."

"No, I didn't."

"Then you sent somebody for it—was it Joel?"

"It warn't Joel, nor nobody else; the gun's there now, I tell you."

"But I know it is not there," returned Mr. Groves, who, having offered the pawnbroker much more for the gun than he was ever likely to get for it, could not see any reason for doubting his word as to its having been reclaimed by the original owner. "Shew me the ticket you got for it; if the gun 's not redeemed, of course you've got the ticket."

"No, I hav'n't; I lost it," returned Burnley.

"That's not very likely," said Mr. Groves, incredulously.

"It's very true, though," said Burnley, beginning to turn sulky. "It warn't never likely to be o' no use to me."

"Come," said Mr. Groves, "you'd better think twice before you refuse me."

"Twice or once, you'll get no other answer from me," returned Burnley.

"Well, then," said Mr. Groves, making a feint to rise, "then I must take other means."

"You may take what means you like—you wont get the gun from me," said Burnley, doggedly.

"Very well," replied Mr. Groves, now

actually rising; "it was no wish of mine to proceed to extremities; but if——"

"What's extremities?" inquired Burnley.

"The extremities of the law, I mean," replied Mr. Groves. "I know very well that it will go hard with you—the magistrates, squires and all, will be against you. There's not a gentleman in the county that wouldn't be glad to see you clapt into jail, or sent across the water; and they'll be very much obliged to me for getting it done for them."

"Then you mean to have me up afore the justices about the gun,—is that it?" inquired Burnley.

"You oblige me to do it," returned Mr. Groves; "as I told you before, it's no wish of mine. What I intended, if you had acted as I expected, was to have hushed up the business, and to have put a stop to any further inquiry about the gun. But wilful men will have their way; if you don't care for your own interest, there's no reason why I should care for it."

"Perhaps there's more folks than me has an interest in hushing it up," said Burnley.

"I know nothing about that," said Groves,

with assumed indifference. "All I know is, that you wont give me the gun, and therefore it's no use my staying here, losing my time."

"So you'll go and give information agen me, eh?" said Burnley.

"You force me to do it," said Mr. Groves, sternly, in hopes that Burnley was beginning to take fright.

"Well," said Burnley, raising himself higher on his bed, and Mr. Groves thought he was about to rise for the purpose of delivering up the gun, "don't be o'er hasty; sit down awhile, and let's have a crack, as they call it, over the border."

"What's the use of talking," said Groves, "if you wont listen to reason."

"Well, sit down; never mind; maybe I may. At any rate, one on us 'll listen to it afore we've done our talk, I warrant. Here, sit down here, there's a bit of a three legged stool; sit close, there's no need for anybody to overhear our talk."

"Why, there's nobody near, is there?" said Mr. Groves, looking round the small, obscure interior of the mole-catcher's hovel.

"There's never no telling who may be

nigh," answered Burnley. "I'd never have guessed you'd been nigh, if I hadn't a-seen you; and I've got things to talk about as wouldn't be good for all folks' ears."

"What things?" said Mr. Groves. "I've nothing to do with your secrets. I came here to ask for my gun; if you don't choose to give it me, I must go."

"Wait awhile," replied Burnley, "and don't be in such a hurry. It isn't my secrets I'm going to trouble you with, it's something nearer home."

"I don't know what you mean," said Mr. Groves, with an evident feeling of uneasiness, and a struggle betwixt his curiosity on the one hand, and an uncomfortable presentiment on the other, which made him hesitate whether to stay or go.

"You shall know in a minute, if you'll only have patience," answered Burnley. "Let every dog have his day. I've heard what you had to say about the gun, and now it's but fair, you know, you should hear what I've got to say."

"Well?" said Groves.

"Well, then," continued Burnley, "do you know where I found that gun?"

"Why, no!" answered Groves, with some confusion; "I never knew exactly where I'd lost it——"

"Oh, lost it!" echoed Burnley; "it war' found afore it war' lost, I fancy. When I found it covered up with three inches of earth, and leaves, and faggots, and what not, a top of it, you see, I didn't know whose it war'. I thought it had belonged to the squire, and that somebody 'ud hid it there that wanted to fetch it away again when nobody was by."

"The last part of your suspicion was most likely correct," said Mr. Groves.

"Why, maybe, in one sense it was, only that I didn't know then as it war' the owner o' the gun that had hid it," answered Burnley.

"The owner!" exclaimed Mr. Groves. "Why, how can you tell who hid it? You didn't see it hid, did you?"

"Why, not exactly, as you may say," replied Burnley, "and yet not far from it. You didn't see me, but I see you come out of the wood."

"Out of the wood!" said Mr. Groves; "I don't understand you."

"Oh, yes! you understand me fast enough," answered Burnley. "What's the use of going

about? I speak of the day the squire was shot. I see you come out o' the wood, I tell you."

"Well, what of that?"

"And I found the gun presently after where you had hid it."

"I'd hid it! What nonsense! Why should I hide my own gun?"

"We'll talk o' that by and bye," replied Burnley. "I didn't know as the gun war' yourn then, or I shouldn't have touched it; and I didn't know what had been doing at the Four Stones neither, or maybe there'd have been more reasons for letting it alone."

Here there was a pause; Mr. Groves was silent because he had not courage to deny further, seeing that denial was vain, and he dreaded too much what the next response might bring, to invite the continuance of the conversation, whilst Burnley seemed to have been overtaken by recollections that somewhat drew his mind from the main thread of the discourse; his eyes were fixed, and the expression of his countenance softened.

"Yes," he continued, resuming, with a sigh, "I wouldn't ha' touched it if I'd known it

had been yourn, nor if I'd guessed what bird it war' it had brought down last."

Mr. Groves could find nothing more to the purpose to say, than to repeat that he "didn't understand."

"I never knew the gun were yourn till Gale told me t'other day," continued Burnley, not noticing Mr. Groves's disclaimer; "and I'm glad I didn't, for I might ha' spoken what I'd ha' been sorry for after; for, maybe, in your place, I'd ha' done the same myself."

"Really, Burnley," began Mr. Groves, "you seem to have got some notion in your head—I don't know what it is, but——"

"Oh, bother!" said Burnley, impatiently; "what's the use of it? D'you think I'm drunk, or mad with the fever, that I'd talk to you in this here way, if I didn't know very well that you did it——"

"Did what?" said Mr. Groves, trying to force a laugh. "Hid the gun?"

"No!" roared Burnley, with the voice of a Stentor, for his patience was exhausted. "Hid the gun—no! Shot the squire, to be sure!"

"Hush! for God's sake don't speak so loud!" said Mr. Groves; "you don't know

who may be near — you don't know what you're saying!"

"It's your own fault!" answered Burnley. "Why do you provoke me?"

"Upon my word, Burnley," began Mr. Groves again, "this is the most extraordinary——"

"I'll tell you what, Mr. Groves," said Burnley, drawing himself higher up in the bed, and fixing his eyes full on the pallid face and trembling lips of Mr. Groves—"I'll tell you what—you did what was right, and I'm the last man as 'ou'd blame you, for I've many a time had a mind to do it myself for the sake of one that's gone. Poor Bessy—Bessy Lee! You remember Bessy?"

"Perfectly," replied Mr. Groves; he could not well forget her, for he had played his accustomed part in that drama, too.

"I war' fond of that girl," continued Burnley. "I lived at Hillside then, you know, but when I got leave to come home here, which was mostly once a-year, she and I kept company together; and the last time I war' here, we'd fixed to be married when I got to be head-keeper at Hillside, which was pro-

mised to me I should when Gale came over to be head-keeper here. But afore that time came, *he'd* got hold of her, and poor Bessy was in the churchyard. I never snared a bird afore that, Mr. Groves, but no man can tell what he may be druv to; but as I was a saying, you did what was right, and no more than he deserved; and I pitied you, for I knew how you was provoked to it; and I guessed pretty well it was you done it, after I heard about your sister from Jane, the housemaid, at Hillside; but when Gale told me the gun war' yourn, then I saw the whole thing as plain as the back of my hand; but as I was a saying, if you ha'n't the courage to own it and stand up to it to a man like me here, face to face, d—n me if I think you war' worthy to shoot him! I hate a skulker, d—n me, as I hate vermin!"

"You seem so determined not to listen to anything I've got to say," began Mr. Groves again, "that there seems no use in my saying anything."

"Not unless you say the truth," answered Burnley.

"And what if I did say what you are determined to call the truth?"

"Why, it 'ould be better for you than

sitting there, trying to skulk out on it, which arn't of no use," replied Burnley, "and only serves to turn my heart agen you. I tell you, I'd ha' shot him myself—many a time I'd a mind to do it."

"How did you know Fanny was my sister?" inquired Mr. Groves, neither confessing nor denying—but postponing.

"I tell you, Jane, at Hillside, told me all about it—she had it from the woman that waited upon her—Mrs. Bingley, they called her—she war' a d—d w——e too; and she told Jane that it was you that had hired her, and sent her to wait upon your sister—a street-walker she was, and no better."

"But I didn't know it was for my sister, when I engaged her," said Mr. Groves, in a suppressed voice, afraid of too far committing himself.

"I know you didn't," replied Burnley; "but you shouldn't have hired a w——e like that to wait upon any young 'oman, unless it war' one as bad as herself—howsomever, you were well punished for it."

"I was indeed," said Mr. Groves, with considerable emotion.

"She war' a pretty young cretur', your sister,

as I'd wish to look upon; I saw her often in the grounds at Hillside, but she wer' awful changed and faded like, afore she'd been there a month."

"She's dying," said Mr. Groves, with a choked voice, and hiding his face with his handkerchief.

"She'll go the way Bessy Lee did," said Burnley. "I thought so when I see her."

"She was fond of him," said Groves. "She was as simple as a child, and believed everything he said to her; and when he got tired of her, it broke her poor heart."

"Mrs. Bingley told Jane," said Burnley, "that you never guessed it was your own sister he'd got, till you carried in the breakfast the next morning after she'd come to him; and that when she saw you, she fell dead on the floor. I wonder you didn't take a knife off the table and stick it into him."

"I'd a mind to it," said Mr. Groves, from whom the vivid recollection of these wrongs had for the moment banished present fears.

"Nobody could have blamed you," said Burnley, "and may be it 'oud have been better than doing it as you did, for then nobody else

could have been blamed for it. It's an awkward thing about Squire Rivers sure*ly*."

"How do you know he didn't do it?" said Mr. Groves, making a desperate effort to rouse himself, and throw off this night-mare that had fallen so unexpectedly upon him.

"What?" cried Burnley, indignantly.

"I say," said Mr. Groves, who ill understood the character of the man he had to deal with, "I say, how do you know he didn't do it? You've got a notion in your head, upon what grounds I don't know, and you stick to it as if——"

"B—st me!" cried Burnley, swearing a bitter oath, "if I couldn't find in my heart to let you swing for it, and it 'oud be no more than you deserve. You come here to threaten me about the gun, and try to frighten me out of it, and talk to me about the law and the justices—I should like to know who's got most cause to be afeard! And when I return good for evil, you ha'n't the generosity to be obliged to me. I tell you what, Mr. Groves—a man as wont trust Tom Burnley may have cause to fear him. Hand me that 'ere water-can."

"You ought to have something to take from

the doctor's," said Mr. Groves, in a friendly tone. "You're in a high fever, and you make yourself worse by your violence."

"D—n it! I can't help it," replied Burnley, "to see that you ha'n't the heart to trust a fellow that means you fair."

"Well, it's no use talking to you now," said Groves. "You must have some medicine."

"Where am I to get it?" inquired Burnley.

"I'll bring it you," answered Mr. Groves, "to-morrow morning."

"'Pothecary's stuff?" said Burnley. "Joel says that's poison."

"Joel talks nonsense," said Mr. Groves. "You'll never get well without you take something. By-the-bye, you haven't been saying anything to Joel about—about the gun—or about——"

"About your job with the squire? No, no; I never talks to people about what's not their business. Joel knows nothing about it."

"But where's the gun, Burnley?"

"D—n me, if I know! I ha'n't got it."

"Well, I'll bring you some medicine to-morrow morning," said Mr. Groves, moving

towards the door. "When do you expect Joel back?"

"Afore sunrise, I suppose."

"You had better try and sleep till he comes."

"Sleep! I wish I could! I ha'n't slept this week past!"

"Well, good by! I'll bring you something to make you sleep."

"I say, Mr. Groves!" said Burnley, calling after him as he went out, "you wont go and inform agen me about the gun, will you? Ha! ha! ha!"

CHAPTER XLVI.

"Que es el diablo sotil, y debaxo de los pies se levanta al hombre, cosa donde tropiece y caya, sin saber como ni como no!"—Don Quixote.

"———— Miserable creature,
If thou persist in this, 'tis damnable.
Dost thou imagine thou canst slide in blood,
And not be tainted with a shameful fall?"
The White Devil.

It may be conceived without much stretch of the imagination, that Mr. Groves did not leave the mole-catcher's residence in a very agreeable or complacent state of mind; and that in spite of Burnley's professions of good faith and fair intentions, he heartily wished him in a place we will not name. The professions might be true, or not—even that was uncertain; but that *any* man should live and breathe in possession of such a secret, a secret

he had thought so secure in his own bosom and that of one other person—holding his life in his hand to play with at pleasure; and *that* a desperate man, a distressed man, a man liable any day to be brought into a court of justice, where things might be extracted from him he never meant to tell—the idea was frightful, terrific, overwhelming, and shook his very soul within him. The only person he had supposed acquainted with his secret was Fanny, his broken-hearted sister. The remorse, and anguish, and terror, he had suffered after his crime, had produced a long and severe illness, which brought him almost to the grave. She had attended him night and day, with unwearied affection, and for some time had believed that her misfortunes were the sole cause of his sufferings; but, at length, when he thought death was really at hand, he had made her his confessor, and had declared his intention of relieving his conscience before he died, by avowing the truth, in order that the additional crime of allowing the innocent to suffer for the guilty might not augment the catalogue of his sins. With this view, he had made Fanny write out a statement of the facts, together with an account of the provo-

cation that had led to the catastrophe, which he intended to place in the hands of a clergyman when the hour of extremity drew nigh. But either his remorse was less acute, or his constitution tougher, than he had reckoned upon; or, perhaps betwixt the exhaustion of illness, and the alleviation of anguish he experienced from his commendable resolutions, and from having found a vent by which he could relieve his bosom of the "perilous stuff" that weighed upon it, his mind had gained a temporary repose, and allowed the restorative powers of nature, or the doctor's skill, fair play. However it was, from the time the confession was written, he began to get better; and with returning health came the love of life, and the fear of shame, together with an intense dread of death, both as regarded the middle passage. and the fate that awaited him at the end of the voyage. For he was not what is called a man of nerve; urged by bitter hatred and resentment, he had committed a desperate and fearful crime, but he trembled at the recollection, as well as at the consequences of it; and, in fact, he had played his part so ill, both when he had first announced Sir John's death to the assembled guests at the castle, and also at the in-

quest, that nothing but the strong presumptions against William Bell and Leonard Graham, and the great confidence entertained in his character, together with the extreme improbability of his committing so unprovoked and motiveless a crime—the events regarding his sister being quite unknown—could have prevented immediate suspicion being attached to him. But prepossessed in his favour, his agitation and confusion had been attributed to grief; nobody had thought of inquiring what had become of his gun, or of ascertaining whether he had one; and he had been pitied and caressed, petted and admired as a faithful, affectionate, and devoted servant. Even had he brought his gun home in his hand, instead of hiding it in the wood, it would have probably excited neither question nor notice; but—we will not quote that horrid heathen maxim, "*Quem Deus vult perdere*," because we feel assured that God desires no man should perish; but we will rather say, that "the foolishness of man is the wisdom of God"—he hid the gun; and the gun rose up and bore witness against him.

At the period of his visit to Burnley, he was in the service of Lady Eastlake, who, as

we believe we have mentioned before, had persisted in fixing herself in the neighbourhood, for the purpose of overlooking Mr. Rivers, and detecting whatever symptoms of guilt his conduct and deportment might betray; and ultimately, as she hoped, unravelling and fixing the crime, of which she felt confident he was the perpetrator. It was not willingly that Mr. Groves accepted Lady Eastlake's situation; it exposed him to a thousand tortures, for she talked unceasingly of her son; and, as he fancied, to dangers too; at least, he felt much safer at a distance; but she would listen to no excuse. She was sick and fanciful, and had evidently not long to live; and she had a notion that nobody but him and Nelly could sympathize with her grief, they being the persons she had considered most devotedly attached to Sir John. Mr. Groves's illness, and sufferings too, had endeared him to her extremely; and, altogether, he held such a place in her esteem, that she behaved to him more as a friend than a servant, and he consequently found himself treated by all ranks, high and low, with an unusual degree of consideration. How dreadful was it, therefore, to reflect that a fellow like Burnley could, by a single breath,

overthrow this edifice so fair to the eye, but built upon the sands. What a life was before him! True, with all the advantages he enjoyed, he was a miserable man—perhaps a more miserable man did not walk the earth; but the unhappiness he had felt before his conversation with Burnley, now, by some magic, faded from his mind. It had been caused by remorse, not fear of detection; for of that, seeing how unsuspected he was, (and it is needless to say that he had taken care to destroy the confession,) he had very little; and now that so suddenly and unexpectedly this imminent peril presented itself before him, his previous condition seemed comparatively blissful, and he fancied himself, for the first time, wretched. In short, fear and self-love being stronger passions in his nature than remorse, this immediate and personal danger gave them the victory; they took entire possession of his mind, and not only stifled remorse, but for the moment, obliterated all recollection of the agonies it had previously cost him.

But what was he to do? How could he ensure Burnley's silence? Never could he be assured of it as long as Burnley breathed. There was nothing left for him but to fly the

country instantly, and place himself beyond the reach of his malice and the arm of the law. But this would not save his character—rather the contrary; for probably that sentiment of pity or sympathy, or whatever it was, that kept the poacher silent now, would influence him no longer when he knew that he was beyond the reach of danger; and however he hated Mr. Rivers, the great advantages that would accrue to himself by a disclosure so important, would most likely outweigh his resentment and aversion. What if he could bribe Burnley to leave the country instead of doing so himself, and get him off to America or Australia? The farther the better. The expense would be great; but even if it swallowed up all he had, the money would be well spent in purchasing peace and safety. But would Burnley go—and go instantly? And if he went, would he stay away? Or would he not return, like evil deeds, "to plague the inventor?" It was a fearful cast, for his life was on the hazard of the die! And with these thoughts working in his brain, he walked back the way he had come; and ever as he went, walking and thinking, some devil seemed to whisper in his ear, "Poison him! poison him!

Stop his breath! stop his breath! and let him speak no more!"

The village of Eastlake did not lay exactly in his road; however, he went round that way, for there dwelt the apothecary, who sold medicines, and as Joel said, *poisons*. He walked past the house on the opposite side, and looked at it—it was night, and there was a light in the little laboratory; and as the window was only shaded by a low muslin curtain, he could distinguish a person moving about within, so he stepped across and peeped over. There was a lad pounding something in a marble mortar, and Mr. Groves wondered if it was poison. There were ranges of jars and bottles on the shelves, and he looked at them all with the same curiosity; they appeared to him like a battery of death, which, if he only knew how, he might turn against his enemy; and he tried to guess, by the form and size of the jars, which of them contained the most deadly draught. As he stood looking over the curtain, the ostler of "The Black Bull" passed him, and entered the shop. He did not know who it was till he saw him, by the light within, approach the counter and address the lad, who immediately turned about, and taking down a

curiously shaped jar, commenced weighing out a small portion of white powder. Mr. Groves immediately opened the door and walked in.

"How are you, Davy?" said he. "What's brought you here?"

"Ah, Mr. Groves, is that you?" said Davy. "There was Mr. Gale, the keeper, up our way axing for you just now?"

"For me?" said Mr. Groves. "What did he want with me? and why did he look for me your way?"

"It was some gem'man as wanted to see you at the keeper's lodge; and Mr. Gale been down to Little Otterley a looking arter you, and they said you was out; so he comed up to our house to see if you war' there."

"But who was the gentleman? Did you hear?"

"I think it war' some o' the Eastlake folk—Bill said he heard some on 'em was down this arternoon."

"The gun," thought Mr. Groves, "no doubt. They'll be trying to find Burnley next."

"What's that you're getting?" he added, as the lad tied up the small packet of powder,

and handed it over to the ostler. "Is anybody at your house sick?"

"It's for the rats," replied Davy. "They be uncommon rife in our stable. We can't keep nothen in the loft for 'em whatsomever."

"And what's that you've got. There was a rat in my room, keeping me awake last night."

"It's ratsbane," replied Davy.

"It's arsenic, sir," said the lad who had weighed it.

"Oh, arsenic!" said Mr. Groves, looking at the little packet with a longing eye. "Ah, I see you write *poison* on it—that's a very proper precaution."

"If I see the keeper, shall I tell him I saw you, Mr. Groves?" said Davy.

"No, no, you needn't," said Groves; "I'll call that way myself."

"I want something that's good for a fever," said he to the lad, when the ostler had quitted the shop.

"What sort of fever?" inquired the lad. "Is it for a man or a woman?"

"Oh! it must be a strong dose—the patient's very bad—very bad indeed. To say

the truth, I don't think it will be of any use. However, it's one's duty to do what one can as long as there's life, you know."

"While there's life there's hope, they say," answered the boy. "Is it one of the servants up at your place, that's ailing?"

"No, no," returned Mr. Groves; "it's a poor fellow that I'm not bound to do anything for, and perhaps he don't deserve it—but one can't see a fellow creature suffer, you know; at least, *I* can't, without trying to relieve him."

"I don't know what it would be best to give, I'm sure," said the lad, "unless I knew what sort of fever it is. Is he very hot?"

"Oh, very! Burning hot!" returned Mr. Groves.

"And restless?" inquired the lad. "Is he in his senses?"

"I don't think he is," answered Groves. "Indeed, I'm sure he's not, from the strange wild way he talks."

"I should think he ought to be bled," suggested the lad. "Wouldn't it be better to let the doctor see him?"

"Why, I wished it—but he wouldn't consent—he's rather unpleasantly situated," returned Mr. Groves, with a significant look.

"In short, it's doubtful whether I shall get him to take anything at all; however, I feel it my duty to try, so if you'll just give me anything you think likely to do good, I'll see what I can do with him—if he won't take it, I can't help it, you know."

"No," returned the lad; "his death wont lie at your door; if people will die, they must."

"What's that you're mixing for him?" inquired Mr. Groves.

"It's just a mixture that wont do him any harm, if it does him no good," said the lad. "It's rhubarb and senna, and extract of colocynth, and I'll give you five grains of calomel for him to take first. You'd better give him the calomel now, and the draught in the morning."

"Very well," said Mr. Groves, taking up the medicine, and slowly transferring it to his pocket. "I was thinking," said he, half-turning from the counter, and hesitating, "whether I'd ask you to give me anything for that rat that disturbed me last night; but it's a dangerous thing to leave about, one's always so afraid of an accident."

"Yes," replied the lad; "it behoves people

to be cautious. I can't say I've ever been over-fond of weighing it out to anybody since that time Mrs. Lang gave it to her husband instead of the calomel."

"But he didn't die?" said Mr. Groves. "How was it he didn't die?"

"He would have died if the doctor hadn't found it out directly," replied the lad. "He was desperate bad, and he says he's never been the same man since."

"Well, good evening," said Mr. Groves, casting a lingering look at the jar of arsenic that still stood upon the counter. "If that rat disturbs me again to-night, I believe I must get a little of that stuff from you to quiet him;" and with an unwilling step he left the shop—unwilling, because he had only done half his errand, his courage had so far failed him he had not dared to ask for the thing he most wanted. He was the coward of conscience; and what Davy had asked for and pocketed with the most entire unconcern, he could not even bring his lips to name, and was obliged to go away without. He lingered about the street, vexed with himself; for, although he had not made up his mind to use poison, still he felt very eager to have some

in his possession; he could then act as circumstances suggested, but now he must either return to the shop by daylight, or wait till the following evening; the first objectionable on many accounts, and the last, perhaps, a perilous delay. Then his thoughts turned upon Gale's inquiries, and the gentleman that wanted to see him. Beyond a doubt it was some of the Eastlake party; probably Mr. Russell, who had got hold of some suspicions connected with the gun, and would never rest till he had hunted up Burnley. Then, where *was* the gun? He could not still help believing that it was in Burnley's possession, and that he was keeping it for some ulterior purpose. His situation, in short, was altogether most critical, and nothing could bring him safely through the pass but Burnley's immediate removal.

He had just arrived at this conclusion when the doctor passed him and entered his own door; and, immediately afterwards, the lad came out and closed the shutter of the laboratory window, so that settled any wavering that remained as to making a further attempt to obtain the poison at present. He would not have chosen to encounter the scrutinizing

eyes of the apothecary, or to make a sensation by ringing the bell after they had shut up for the night; so he loitered on, unresolved what to do till he reached "The Black Bull." The door of the house was closed, but there was a bench under the porch, and upon that he seated himself. The street was now pretty nearly empty, but the interior of the little inn was alive. There was a light from the window of the tap-room, and he could hear the song and the laugh of the company within; so he sat still, listening vaguely to the merry voices of the guests, and to the few and faint echoes of closing night in the quiet village. The barking of a dog, the shutting of a door, and the somewhat distant sound of the blacksmith's hammer, who lived at the other end of the street, and who, having a job to do against morning, was working beyond hours.

Presently, the silence was interrupted by a just perceptible sound, which Mr. Groves at first imagined to proceed from the getting up of a gentle breeze. The wind seemed to be stirring the leaves of the trees in the neighbouring churchyard; but no, it was not that; the sound was of wheels; there was a carriage approaching, a circumstance not very common

at that hour. A carriage it was, however, and it drew nearer, but very slowly. It did not come through the street, but from the opposite direction, and at length it turned the corner close to the inn, and stopped before the door. It proved to be a gig, and the owner was leading the horse. "Hollo! House!" he cried, not seeing Mr. Groves, who sat in the shade; and then, after patting his horse on the shoulder, which he apparently intended the animal to interpret into a recommendation to stand still, he stepped aside, and knocked with his fist against the door, whereupon, Bill, the waiter, opened it, and seeing a carriage, called Davy.

"Come here!" said the traveller; "I have met with an accident. My horse has had a fall, and I'm afraid he has broken his knees."

"Ah, sure!" said Davy, stooping down to examine one leg of the horse, whilst the owner examined the other. "I'm afeard he have. Where did he come down?"

"About a mile and a half from this," replied the traveller. "There's a little hill—nothing of a hill, either—it was just at the turn, as we got to the bottom; down he came all fours, smack, as if he was shot."

"Ah! they always come down there," said Davy. "There's more horses comes down there, I b'lieve, than twenty miles round. Fetch a lantern, Bill, and let's see what's the matter."

"I wanted to get on as far as York to-night, if possible," said the traveller; "but I doubt whether he'll be able to go any further."

"He might, if you don't let him get stiff," answered Davy; "but most like he'll be the worse of it. Here! hand us the lantern, Bill! Ah!" he added, "he's broke his knees, sure enough! He must ha' come down with a terrible slap!"

"I don't know how I escaped," said the traveller. "I wonder I didn't get my neck broke. I fell forwards upon the horse, and had just time to roll off before he began to struggle."

"Hold the light, Bill!" said Davy, handing the lantern to the boy; and drawing a red cotton handkerchief from his pocket, he began to whisk away the dust that had lodged about the horse's knees, in order that he might the better discern the extent of the injury.

"I wouldn't advise you to take him further," said he, to the traveller. "There's an awful

gash on the off knee; he must have come down upon a stone."

"It's very unlucky," said the traveller. "However, you'd better lead him to the stable. Have you got a farrier here?"

"Yes," returned Davy; "but I b'lieve I knows as much about a horse as he does; but if you wish to see him, the boy can fetch him."

"Yes, you'd better send for him," said the traveller; so, whilst Davy and the stranger proceeded with the horse to the stable, Bill started up the street in search of the horse-leech.

As soon as the gig had disappeared within the stable yard, and Bill's receding footsteps began to grow faint upon the ear, Mr. Groves softly arose, and, advancing to where the horse had stood, he stooped down, and with a palpitating heart and a trembling hand, he grasped a small white packet that had issued from the ostler's pocket when he drew out his handkerchief, and had dropped unobserved upon the ground. As he clutched it, he almost laughed out for joy. "What a stroke of fortune it was, without the risk of purchasing it, thus unseen to get it! Ha! ha!"

He thought a moment, and then turning towards the inn door, he knocked loudly at it.

"Is Gale the keeper here?" he said.

"No, sir," replied Mrs. Green; "he was here awhile ago, asking for you, but he went away again."

"Well," said Mr. Groves, "if he calls again, tell him—by-the-bye, is there anybody in this room?" and he lifted the latch of a door to the right of the passage, that led into a small parlour; "no, I see there's nobody. Then have the goodness to bring me a pen and ink, and a sheet of paper, and I'll leave a line for Gale in case he calls again."

"Yes, sir, directly," answered Mrs. Green; for, as we have observed, Mr. Groves was a great man in the village, and the assiduous hostess quickly returned with the articles required, together with a tallow candle, which appeared to have been very hastily inserted into a tall brass candlestick.

"I'm sorry there isn't a bit of fire in the grate, Mr. Groves," said Mrs. Green, "for the evening 's chilly; but the girl shall put a light to it in a minute, if you like."

"Oh, dear, no!" returned Mr. Groves, seating himself at the table. "I'm not going to stay two minutes."

"How is her ladyship to-day, sir?" inquired Mrs. Green.

"Very indifferent," replied Mr. Groves.

"Ah, sir! poor lady! times are sadly changed with her. I saw her one day sitting at the window of the drawing-room, at Little Otterley, when I went up to call on Mrs. Black, the housekeeper; lawk! what a change there was upon her! I'm sure it made my heart ache when I thought what a young, gay, handsome looking woman she was this time last year. Many a time I used to say to Green, my poor husband that's gone, when she and the squire used to be driving past, that they looked more like brother and sister than mother and son. But grief changes people sadly! I'm sure I was only observing to Mrs. Dunn, up at the post-office, yesterday, when I dropt in to ask how her daughter was—Sally Dunn 's had the measles—what a change there is in you, Mr. Groves, since Sir John's death. But, no wonder! So attached as you was to him; and as he was to you. Poor man! He died calling upon you to save him, as one may say; didn't he, sir? But it wasn't to be. It seemed just like fate, that he should have sent you out of the way with the birds, just when the murderer was lying in wait for

him. It shews that people can't escape what's cut out for them, be they high or be they low. But, lawk! sir, *do* you really think it was Mr. Rivers that did it? Somehow or other, I've never been able to bring it to my mind; though, to be sure, he had more reason to wish him dead than anybody else. But do you think it 'll be found against him, sir?"

"I hope not," returned Mr. Groves, dipping his pen in the ink, as a signal that he wished to be allowed to write his letter; but Mrs. Green, instead of taking the hint, advanced a step nearer to the table, and said,

"Well, sir, I heard a thing the other day——" here she turned round, and perceiving that the door of the room was open, she shut it, and then returning to the table and laying her hand on it, she continued, lowering her voice, "I heard as Burnley—he that was keeper, and was turned away—I heard as he should say, that he'd got something to tell at the trial as would astonish everybody, and that them should swing as never expected it; and people suppose he means the squire, of course; and no doubt Burnley 'd be very glad to tell anything against him if he can; and I did hear a person say, that he knew to a certainty

that Burnley was about in the Cane woods that day Sir John was shot; but that he'd his own reasons for not telling all he knew at the time."

"Indeed!" said Mr. Groves, passing his hand over his face.

"Yes, sir," replied Mrs. Green; "and the person that told it me had it from a person that heard Burnley say it."

"Well," said Mr. Groves, drawing the paper towards him, and beginning to write, "we must hope the truth will be discovered; but I shouldn't think anything Burnley said much worth attending to. I believe he's a great scoundrel, and would say anything to injure a person he'd taken a grudge against."

"I dare say that's very true, sir," said Mrs. Green, "and no doubt he's got a grudge against the squire, for discharging him without a character; but as you say, sir, we must hope that the truth will be found out; and that them as did it may suffer, as they ought to do, for taking away the life of such a good gentleman;" and having delivered herself to this effect, the hostess quitted the room.

CHAPTER XLVII.

"I go, and it is done."

MACBETH.

"Hadst thou the same free will and power to stand?
Thou hadst."

PARADISE LOST.

WE are not sure that it was needed, but certainly the discourse of the worthy hostess was, to use a common phrase, driving a nail in Burnley's coffin. We are not sure that it was needed, because, although certainly it acted as a spur to Mr. Groves' intent, we think the intent was formed before he heard it. From the moment the idea suggested itself to him, which was whilst he stood by the poacher's bed-side, he had ardently wished to obtain the poison; but he was very far from having any fixed determination to use it. He rather de-

sired it as something that in a last extremity he might interpose betwixt himself and ruin—at least so he thought; but, perhaps, the best chance Burnley had was in Mr. Groves's want of nerve and self-command, which would probably have prevented his ever summoning courage and countenance to purchase the drug. But from the moment he obtained possession of it so secretly and securely, his mind had overleapt all scruple and hesitation; he neither argued nor reflected further, but jumped at once to the conclusion.

When Mrs. Green had, to his great relief, made her exit and closed the door, he arose and turned the key; and then, untying the apothecary's parcel, he took out the little paper of calomel, and throwing the contents into the grate, he replaced them with some of the powder from Davy's packet, and then tying up the parcel again, he deposited it safely in one pocket, and the remains of the arsenick in the other; after which he sat down and scribbled two or three unmeaning lines to Gale, which he had scarcely finished, before the latch of the door was lifted, and some one attempted to enter. This reminded him that he had locked it, so he arose and

turned the key. The intruder proved to be Bill, who had come to lay the cloth for the traveller's supper; and to his care Mr. Groves committed his letter, desiring him to give it to Gale, should he call again to inquire for him; and having bade good night to the officious Mrs. Green, who insisted on lighting him to the door, he took his departure, prudently dropping the little packet where he had found it, lest Davy should return to search for it. Not long after he had quitted the house, the traveller was ushered into the parlour by Bill; he was in great trouble about his horse, which the farrier had pronounced quite unfit to travel. Nevertheless, he said he must get on to York that night, if possible; and Davy was commissioned to engage for him the best horse the village afforded. It proved but a sorry hack; but as there was no help for it, he took it, and agreed to leave his own in the care of the farrier till he returned that way, which, he said, would be in about a month; and then, having eaten his supper, he stept into his gig, and drove away.

In the meantime, Mr. Groves turned his steps towards the molecatcher's hovel. The shortest road lay through the churchyard, and

as the heavens were star-lit, and there was a young moon, the green graves and mossy tombs, and the venerable little church, with its oriel window and its Saxon arches, were distinctly visible. Vincent Groves looked down upon the graves, and thought of the grave-digger, that ere the moon grew round would be at work there, making a place of rest for one whom he should send him. It had been better he had looked aloft upon the fair worlds, rolling in the blue æther, and their bright suns looking down upon *him*—the eye of the universe perusing his secret soul—and the foreknowing mind his fate—he might haply have read it there, for there it was inscribed amongst the eternal laws—unchangeable—not that he should sin, but that he should suffer if he sinned. The train that led from the sin to its chastisement was laid *from the beginning*, but it rested with his own free will to fire it or not. But Vincent Groves was never taught to read that scroll,—few are, the more's the pity! free scholars and self-taught, the most of those that read it with a knowing eye, and imbibe it in their souls,—blind with ignorance, he groped along, not seeing that wickedness is folly, not wisdom; nor discern-

ing the adamantine links that enchain our actions to their consequences, and entail the penalty, inseparably, on the crime; and as his eyes were blind, so his ears were deaf, or he would have listened to the strain of the rippling stream as he walked beside it; and to the zephyrs that played amongst the trees—each leaf a voice; and to the song of the beetle's wings, and the merry chirp of the field cricket; and to the shriek of the grey owl that called to him from the ivy-grown tower; and to the universal music of the silent night, that chanted low in one harmonious chorus, *Hold!* But he heard them not, or understood—for theirs was a language he had not been taught; and as in the scroll of the heavens, he could not interpret characters to which he had no key; neither, amidst this concert, could his dull ear detect the burden of the song that nature sang to him. For the spirit of man, which should be god-like, and should make the body its instrument whereby to see, and hear, and learn, and understand, is so debased by wickedness—which is ignorance—that it forfeits its authority, and the master degraded, the servant rebels; and the senses, sluggish and perverted agents, cease to inform, and

expound, and illumine; and the darkness within becomes darker, the windows of the soul let in no light, and the benighted spirit gropes its errant way further and further from the one true path, which, fore-knowing, it would never have forsaken.

How many a wretched soul that is steeped in sin—how many that have paid its last penalty—the last here on earth—what balance remains beyond we know not—how many might have been saved, if their eyes and ears had but been trained to see and hear—instructed to read the book of nature, and to listen to her voice! There is not a wild flower in the fields, nor a bird chirping from its nest, nor a buzzing insect in the air, that is not enough to make man virtuous, if its deep eloquence were interpreted aright.

The dull light still gleamed from the window of the hovel, just enough to distinguish the hut from the boulders amongst which it was hidden; and with noiseless footsteps, for the loose sandy soil gave back no echo, Vincent Groves drew near, and listened. Burnley was speaking—could Joel have returned? No; it was the poacher, giving vent to his impatience in the voice of peevish complaint.

He swore an oath, and turned heavily on his rude, uneasy bed, as his visitor lifted the latch and entered.

"How are you now, Burnley?" inquired Mr. Groves, in a friendly voice.

"What! Is it you back?" said Burnley. "Why, I'm blasted bad; what's brought you back so soon? Are you come after the gun again!"

"The gun! no," replied Groves. "I've brought some medicine for you."

"The devil you have!" said Burnley, apparently surprised at the attention; "is it anything that 'ull do me good?"

"The doctor says it will," returned Mr. Groves. "I got it out of Bright's shop, so I suppose it's all right."

"Well, hand it over," said Burnley, reaching out his hand. "What is it—a ball?"

"No," replied Groves, untying the parcel; "here's two things; here's a powder for you to take now, and a draught in the morning."

"Why not take 'em both now?" said Burnley. "What's the use o' waiting till the morning? Here, hand 'em over!"

"Stop!" returned Groves; "you can't swallow the powder alone—have you got any bread in the house?"

"Bread! no," answered Burnley; "there's some cold potatoes, if that 'll do; they're up there on the shelf."

"We must make it do," replied Groves, turning to the shelf, which was Joel's larder; and where, on fragments of white delf, he found the remains of a hare, together with some potatoes, butter, and salt. With a due proportion of these last, he mixed the contents of the white paper, and then, according to Burnley's direction, rolled the dose into a ball; for he said his stomach turned so sickly at the sight of food, that if he did not bolt it, he should never get it down, nor keep it there.

"Come, that 'll do," said Burnley; "hand it over!" as Mr. Groves lingered somewhat over the operation; and he lifted himself up in the bed, and stretched out his arm.

Mr. Groves stood betwixt him and the light, whilst he prepared the dose, with his back turned to the bed, so that the sick man could not see his face; and when he turned round to

administer it, the candle being behind him, his features were still in the shade, else Burnley, albeit without suspicion, could hardly have failed to be struck with the strange expression of horror and irresolution they displayed; for when it came to the point, his nerves so failed him, that it was the turn of a hair whether he should give the poison or not; but Burnley's impatience weighed down the scale. "Come, man," said he, "make haste!" And Mr. Groves, who had no reason ready to assign for further delay, with a trembling hand, held out the bolus. Burnley snatched it, and swallowed it. "It's big enough to choke a horse," said he, sinking down again in his bed, whilst Mr. Groves stood staring at him in silence, transfixed with horror, and almost expecting him to be seized on the instant with the agonies of death, and expire before his eyes.

"What's the other thing? I'd better take it at once, and have done with it," said Burnley.

"No," replied Mr. Groves, in a hollow voice; "you must wait till the morning."

There was something in the tone that struck

on Burnley's ear, for he raised his eyes to his face, and said, "I ha'n't got the gun; if I had, I'd give it you; Ball's got it, and I've lost the ticket, that's the truth; but you needn't be afeard, I wont split, blast me if I do! Tom Burnley's not the chap to forget a kind action. They may draw all the teeth out o' my head afore they get anything out o' me. I'd ha' been sorry for William Bell, maybe; but I don't owe no good turn to the squire, no more than I did to t'other. There's my fist on it." And he held out his feverish hand to Mr. Groves. "'Dang it, man, how cold you are!" said he; "one 'ud think you'd got the shivers!"

"It's because you're so hot," answered Groves. "Well, I must be going," he said. "You'll be sure to take the draught in the morning;" and his lips quivered as the words dropped from them.

"Ay, put it here beside me, and give me the mug off the shelf."

"Good night!" said Mr. Groves, with a faltering voice, having done what the sick man desired—"Good night! I hope you'll be better—to-morrow."

"Perhaps you'll look in again?" said Burnley. "Joel's mostly out, and one might die here like a dog in a ditch, and nobody to give one a drink of water."

"I will," said Mr. Groves, closing the door —"Good night!"

CHAPTER XLVIII.

"*D'Amville.* Ay, mark the plot. Not any circumstance
That stood within the reach of the design,
——— but by this brain of mine, was made
An instrumental help!

Borachio. Then darkness did
Protect the execution of the work,
Both from prevention and discovery."

ATHEIST'S TRAGEDY.

BURNLEY had never entertained any intention of betraying Mr. Groves; and, indeed, till he learnt the gun was his, he had only vague suspicions that he might be the assassin; suspicions founded on the history of Fanny, which he had heard not long before, on a visit he made to Hillside. Then the idea occurred to him; partly suggested by sympathy, for, as he said, many a time he would have liked to

do the same, for the sake of poor Bessy Lee. When he first found the gun, he fancied somebody had stolen it, and hid it; afterwards, when circumstances seemed to point to Mr. Rivers as the criminal, he thought it was probably his; that it had been the instrument of the crime, and that he, for some reason or another, had concealed it there; and it was against him that the vague threats which Mrs. Green reported, and which Mr. Groves appropriated to himself, had been directed. Threats, however, which would probably have never been fulfilled without further provocation; for with all his faults, there was a spice of good-nature about Burnley, and though he hated Mr. Rivers, he would hardly have carried his revenge further than words. At least, if he had been disposed to seek revenge, it would not have been by an act that, according to his code of morals, he would have looked upon as cowardly. He would rather have shot him at the risk of his own life, than have given information against him.

About five hours had elapsed since Mr. Groves's departure, when Joel Gapper, with his pockets well lined with game, came tramping along the sandy road towards his own

hovel. The first gleam of day was dawning in the east, and already the young birds in their nests were chirping, impatient for their breakfast, and their tender parents pluming their wings to seek it.

Joel was wondering how he should find his guest, and forming a project of curing him by a broiled rabbit, and a swig out of the leathern bottle, when the two little curs that were at his heels, erected their ears and uttered a low growl.

"Eh?" said Joel, stopping short, and erecting *his* ears. "Eh? what be it, boys?" In answer to which question, the dogs set their tails between their legs, and growled again, a little louder.

"What?" said Joel, looking down at them, to discover to what quarter their attention was directed, "some'ut wrong, be there?"

The dogs cast their eyes up to his face, and then somewhat quickening their pace, trotted forwards.

"Humph!" said Joel; "hawks, belike! They'll find nothen there but the bones of the hare, and I can swear that was a cat." But as it would not have been so easy to swear that the birds he had in his pocket were also cats,

he drew them out, and depositing them in a secure spot, covered them with sand. The dogs had in the meantime trotted forward, and he was just about to hasten after them, when a strange sound reached his ears—a sound that made him pause again, to listen. It came from the direction of his own hut, which, though not very far distant, he could not see for the rocks that intervened, and it sounded like the neighing of a horse—at least, so he thought. That was very strange! what horse could be there? He moved forward a little—hark! there it is again! It's not the neighing of a horse—it's the cry of a human voice—it's a cry of agony; and the voice is Burnley's.

Wondering and perplexed, Joel strode forwards as this conviction broke upon his mind; whilst, ever and anon, as he advanced, the same dreadful cry assailed his ears, and shook his nerves; for hardy and inured to danger as he was, there was something so strange and terrific in the voice, that the blood flowed back upon his heart, and almost stopped his breath.

What was more strange, the voice evidently did not proceed from the hovel, but from a spot some yards to the left of it; and thither,

preceded by the dogs, Joel, with hasty steps, advanced.

"Hallo!" cried Burnley, when, by the arrival of the dogs, he learnt that their master was at hand.

"Hallo!" answered Joel, passing the hut, the door of which was open, and turning the corner of a projecting piece of rock; "Hallo! what's the matter?" said he.

"The matter!" cried Burnley, in a voice which fury and pain rendered scarcely articulate; "the matter!" and he turned up a face to Joel that made his blood run cold, for Burnley was lying upon his back on the ground, whither he had crawled in his anguish and impatience—"the matter is, that I'm poisoned!"

"Pisoned!" said Joel; "what, you ha'n't been a-taking doctor's stuff, have you?"

"Harkye, Joel," said Burnley, trying to rise; "here—lift me up—I shall be dead in half an hour—Oh, Lord! how my inside burns! There, let me go! let me go!" he shrieked, falling back again, and drawing up his legs in the mortal struggle—"he'll burn in hell for it yet, d—d scoundrel that he is!"

"Who? The doctor?" said Joel. "Didn't I tell you his stuff was pison?"

"The doctor? No!" groaned Burnley; "Groves—Groves came here—I found a gun of his that he'd buried when he shot the squire—mind what I say—'twas he—Groves, the valet, that shot him—d'ye hear?"

"Ay, I hear," said Joel, who comprehended so little, that he concluded Burnley was raving.

"Then look as if you heard," said Burnley, "for I ha'n't no words to throw away—he thought I'd split—he took me for a sneaking scoundrel like himself—and he pretended he'd brought something from the doctor that 'ud cure me—but it was ratsbane—he made it into a ball with the cold potatoes, and I swallowed it, like a fool—d'ye hear?"

"Ay, ay, I hear," said Joel, wishing to soothe him; for this detail was mingled with furious oaths and cries of agony, that satisfied Joel he was delirious.

"D—n me! if I think you believe me!" exclaimed Burnley.

"Oh! yes, yes, I do;" answered Joel, perplexed what to do. "Hadn't you better come into the house?"

"Come into the house?" cried Burnley; "I shall never come into any house again—but one, and that'll be one the sexton 'll build

for me—I say!" continued he, suddenly, "how long 'ud you be going to Eastlake? Could you do it, and back, in an hour?"

"I think I could," replied Joel.

"Then run for your life?" said Burnley, "and fetch the doctor—and if you see Gale, bring him with you—send somebody to fetch him. I shall never rest in my grave if I ar'n't sure that scoundrel 'ull be hanged, and sent to hell after me!"

"Well, I'll go," said Joel, looking irresolute.

"Be off, then!" cried Burnley, fiercely, for he saw that if he could not deposit his secret with some more understanding person than Joel, it would be lost—"be off, and make the best of your legs! or d—n me if I don't come out of my grave, and stick to you like a leech, of a night when you're——"

"Ar'n't I going?" said Joel, interrupting him hastily, suiting the action to the word, and starting off with a degree of rapidity that evinced the power of Burnley's adjuration; for freebooter as he was, the idea of a ghost was abhorrent to Joel; he feared nothing alive; but a spectre as the companion of his nightly expeditions, would have been most unpleasant to his feelings, and he was by no means

satisfied that Burnley might not keep his word.

It was broad morning when he arrived at Eastlake, but still so early that few of the inhabitants had quitted their beds; and Mr. Bright, the apothecary, as well as his assistant, were still enjoying their morning slumbers. The latter, however, was disturbed from his by the "tintinnabulary clatter" of the molecatcher, who earnestly requested the immediate attendance of the doctor at his residence. As Joel did not himself believe a word of Burnley's story about Mr. Groves having been there and given him poison, he said nothing about it; he only described the patient as being in a raving state, and at the point of death. So the doctor arose and accompanied him, or rather preceded him, for he mounted his horse and trotted off at a good round pace, whilst Joel made the best of his way on foot, not forgetting to despatch a lad to tell Gale what was going on, and desiring him to come as quickly as possible.

All this, however, had occupied a great deal more than the hour, and by the time the doctor reached the molecatcher's hovel, Burnley was speechless, and in the last agonies of death,

and before Joel arrived he had expired; so they lifted the body betwixt them into the hut, and laid it on the bed; and then Joel discovered the vial containing the draught, duly labelled, "to be taken in the morning," lying on the floor, where Mr. Groves, at Burnley's desire, had placed it.

"Then somebody war' here," exclaimed he, "for here's doctor's stuff. I thought it wer' all raving, for my part."

This circumstance led to inquiries on the part of the doctor, and an explanation from Joel, extremely confused and unsatisfactory however, as what he did not in the least comprehend himself, of course he could not make clear to another. That Burnley should die if he had taken "doctor's stuff" appeared to him a very natural concatenation of events; but how he got it was not so easily accounted for. However, he told the doctor all he knew; and the doctor took away the draught with him, for the purpose of investigating the mystery, which was dispersed to his entire satisfaction by a few words with his assistant. It appeared quite clear that Mr. Groves, having procured the medicines at his shop, had administered the calomel, and then left the patient, who had

been too far gone before he took it, for it to do him either good or harm.

So Burnley was buried; and as nobody cared whether he were alive or dead, no inquiries were made about him, and the affair excited very little notice, and was soon forgotten. Indeed, the doctor, to say the truth, was not anxious to draw attention to it, or keep it alive; he was perfectly satisfied that the medicine had nothing to do with the patient's death; but he was aware, that if once the rumour that he had been poisoned, got about, people would be apt to say that his assistant had sold arsenic for calomel, and he might suffer almost as much inconvenience from the imputation, as if it were true. He therefore nipped question and curiosity in the bud, by pronouncing definitively that Burnley had died of inflammation.

Gale, however, when he arrived at Joel's hovel, in pursuance of the summons he had received, though he found his friend dead, was informed of all the circumstances that had preceded the catastrophe; but the inference he drew was not that Burnley was raving when he talked about the gun, and accused Mr. Groves of being his assassin. That the

gun belonged to Mr. Groves, he knew to be true; and that Burnley had found it in the wood he did not doubt; and his conclusion was, that they had quarrelled, and come to high words; that Mr. Groves had probably had recourse to menaces, in the hope of inducing him to restore it, or at all events to leave the neighbourhood; and that Burnley, irritated by his sufferings, had accused him either in anger or error. That he had died any other than a natural death, he had no suspicion; but, nevertheless, he thought it right that Mr. Groves should be informed both of his decease and of what he had said; and he had also to mention to him, that Mr. Elias was at Eastlake, and had been wishing to speak to him on the subject of the gun; although Burnley's death rendered the object of the desired interview no longer important.

With this intention, he walked over to Little Otterley in the afternoon, and requested to see Mr. Groves; but was informed, that the sudden illness of his sister had called him to London, and that he had departed by the morning's mail.

CHAPTER XLIX.

"Chi ti fa carrezze più che non suole,
O t'ha ingannato, o ingannar ti vuole."

"L'esprit voit bien; c'est l'impulsion du caractère qui peut égarer."—LE PRINCE DE LIGNE.

As the reward of a thousand pounds had not been offered for the discovery of the murderer of Sir John Eastlake, but for that of William Bell, the result of the trial made no difference whatever with respect to Jessie's claims. Whether he proved to be the assassin or not, she was equally entitled to the reward; and accordingly, in due time she was informed that the money would be paid to her on demand, at a certain banker's in the Strand. Paid to *her*, and not to Jacob Lines, who, although he, all through the business, intended it for himself,

had yet his own private reasons for not coming forward to claim it.

Experience had, however, by this time made Jessie somewhat wiser—very little, certainly; and it would be, perhaps, more correct to say, that it had taught her some degree of suspicion and distrust of her lover. Although at times he still re-enacted the part of Romeo, calling the gods to witness his devotion to her charms, and arraigning the cruelty of his uncle, who, he asserted, would turn him out of his house, and throw him destitute upon the world, if he suspected their connexion; still there were moments when he either forgot his part, or when he felt too secure of his game to submit to the trouble of sustaining it; and although a short scene, a few tender words, and passionate, hackneyed phrases, which appeared to Jessie altogether original, and invented expressly for her service, were sufficient to re-establish his influence, and re-awaken her devotion to his person and his black whiskers and imperial, still there had been a little fund of doubt insensibly accumulating in a corner of her brain, which rendered her exceedingly unwilling to put the thousand pounds she had so painfully earned into his hands, without

being sure of her reward. She had given up her place at Lord Belton's, and had been for some time maintained by Lines. Whilst she was in service, her time was not sufficiently her own to leave her at liberty to follow out his plans; he had, therefore, sworn he could not live without her, and had established her in a lodging, but she was not yet his wife. The preliminary to the marriage ceremony was to be the payment of the thousand pounds, on the proceeds of which inexhaustible sum, they were to live in affluence and *gentility* for the rest of their lives. The money was now in Jessie's right hand, but the question was—should she resign all power over it?—should she give it up to her lover without insisting on being first made his wife? Certainly, from the moment of William Bell's capture, up to that of the money being paid, Jacob's conduct had been unexceptionable; his passion seemed to have recovered all its former intensity, and he had talked daily and hourly of their approaching nuptials, but he had refused to be asked in church, lest his uncle should hear of it, and had promised to purchase a licence as soon as they had the means. Now, this matter of the licence Jessie did not understand, and,

therefore, did not altogether like. Had they been asked in church, she would have considered herself "as good as married," and would have given Jacob the money without scruple, but she could not help hesitating to give it him without any security whatever; and as she did not know but she might find him waiting for her at the corner of the first street, she stood looking at the money in a state of evident perplexity, that at length attracted the attention of the banker who had paid it to her.

"You don't seem very well to know what to do with all that money now you've got it, young woman," said he.

Jessie looked up at him without answering, for her difficulty was of a nature that she could not well explain.

"You can leave it here, if you like," continued he, judging from her manner that she actually *was* at a loss how to dispose of it, "or you can place it in the Bank of England and receive interest for it."

"Can I?" said Jessie, who was utterly ignorant of all such arrangements.

"Yes, you can," returned the banker; "and I think you had better do so, rather

than carry it about with you. You'll lose it, or have it stolen from you, if you don't take care."

"Can I get it whenever I like, if I leave it here?" asked Jessie.

"Certainly," replied the banker.

"And can nobody get it but me?"

"Nobody, unless you give them an order."

So Jessie agreed to leave it, and returned to Jacob with the news of what she had done, a piece of intelligence as unwelcome as it was unexpected; and so much hurt did he appear by the want of confidence in his affection the proceeding implied—for her confusion, when he interrogated her, betrayed her motive—that she was at length moved to go back and ask for the money. Her sudden re-appearance, however, and her flushed countenance, having somewhat raised the curiosity and interest of the banker, he led her aside in order to make some inquiries with respect to her situation, and what she was going to do with so large a sum.

"It's to give to a young man I'm going to be married to," answered Jessie, after some hesitation.

"Hadn't you better wait till you *are* married to him?" said the banker. "Is it at his instigation you have returned here for it?"

"Yes," replied she; "he was offended at my not bringing away the money. He said it was like suspecting him."

"Have you no friends to take care of you and your money?" inquired the banker.

"No," answered Jessie, blushing.

"Well," said the banker, "I'd advise you to keep your money in your own power, or else you'll lose both that and your husband, too, I suspect."

This suggestion was too much the echo of Jessie's own almost unacknowledged thoughts not to have considerable weight with her.

"I think I'll leave the money till to-morrow, sir, if you please," she said; and once more she returned to the expectant Jacob, empty-handed.

"The truth is, Jacob," said she, "the gentleman that paid me the money, asked me what I was going to do with it, and when I told him it was to give to you——"

"To me!" cried Jacob. "You didn't say it was for me, did you?"

"I said it was to give to a young man I was going to be married to," replied Jessie. "I didn't tell your name."

"Well?" said Lines; "go on. It's only, you know, my apprehension of anything meeting my uncle's ears. But what the devil business is it of this man's what you're going to do with your money?"

"He asked me if I'd any friends to take care of it," returned Jessie; "and he said——"

"Well, what did he say?"

"Why, he said that it wasn't the custom to give up the money till after marriage, and advised me to leave it with him; so I didn't like to act contrary to his advice, you know."

"Scoundrel!" exclaimed Mr. Lines. "He wants to pocket it himself, I suppose."

"Oh, no!" said Jessie; "he's quite a gentleman; an old man; I think he's the master."

"But how can we be married without the money?" said Lines. "How are we to get the licence?"

"I could get enough of it to pay for the licence," suggested Jessie.

"Well, we must think of it," answered Lines; and he did appear to be thinking of it,

for he fell straightways into a long fit of abstraction, which not only lasted all the way home, but a considerable part of the evening.

"Jessie," said he, at length, "there are a good many things to be thought of connected with this business—our marriage, I mean—which you do not sufficiently consider."

"What things?" inquired Jessie.

"Why, it's very true that we can be married now, if we like; and that as we've got the thousand pounds, there's no need to care for my uncle, one way or the other. Still, I must say I think it would be a pity to throw up the chance—and, indeed, it's more than a chance, for it's a certainty—of all he intends to do for me, if I stay with him another year. As I told you, he looks upon me as his son, having no children of his own; and every sixpence he leaves is to come to me—that is, if I don't offend him."

"But he may live these hundred years," said Jessie, pouting her cherry lips; for she thought this exordium promised ill. "If we're to wait to be married till he 's dead, we may as well give it up at once."

"Heaven forbid I should wait all that time," exclaimed Mr. Lines, vehemently, "though

we well know that there's nothing more uncertain than human life; and between you and I—though God forbid I should reckon on anything of the sort—but my uncle, poor man! is not so healthy as he appears; however, that's neither here nor there at present; we wont speak of that. But to return to what concerns us more immediately—the fact is, although it's a thing he doesn't wish known, and, indeed, he charged me not to speak of it, lest it should injure the business; but he has made up his mind to retire from the shop at the end of the year, and intends making the whole concern over to me at once. He says he 's got plenty to live upon, and to spare; and he doesn't see why he should be tied to the counter for the rest of his days, which he is aware are not likely to be many."

"He looks very well," objected Jessie.

"Ah!" replied Jacob, "there's nothing to be less depended on than looks, in a man at my uncle's time of life. He's subject to a plethora that may carry him off in a moment."

"Is that a dangerous complaint?" inquired Jessie.

"Very alarming, indeed," returned Jacob,

with a portentous shake of the head; "sure to carry him off, sooner or later."

"But I thought we were to live upon our fortune, without any business at all," said Jessie.

"As long as we can," replied Jacob; "but a thousand pounds wont last for ever; and with respect to the business, when once it's ours, we can either keep it or sell it, as we please. That shop, together with the stock, and the good will, would bring us a pretty bit of money, I can tell you."

"How much?" inquired Jessie.

"Why, perhaps, five thousand pounds."

"My!" exclaimed Jessie; "then we should have six thousand pounds! Why, we might live like gentlefolks, and keep a coach upon that, couldn't we?"

"To be sure we could," answered Lines; "and wouldn't my little Jessie like that? And shouldn't I like to see her dressed in silks and satins, like any lady in the land?"

"Sweeping along," said Jessie, rising from her seat, and walking with bent knees, so that her skirt trailed on the ground; "sweeping along with a train, like the best of them! The very first thing I'll have shall be a ruby velvet

trimmed with gold, and a train, like Lady Louisa Scott's. She came to dine at his lordship's in it one day. Oh, Jacob! you never saw anything look so beautiful! And she has light hair and light eyes; and of course a person with black hair and eyes would look a great deal better in it; wouldn't they?"

"To be sure you will," said Lines; "and it shall be the very first present I make you. Be sure you remind me of it—a real Genoa velvet it shall be; because they don't spoil with sitting as the English and French velvets do. There's nothing I like to see a woman better in than a handsome velvet dress, and gold ornaments—that is, a woman that has face and figure to carry it off. A little, mean, dumpy, ugly woman only makes herself ridiculous by putting on what was never intended for her; but a really splendid woman never looks better than in a rich velvet, at five-and-twenty shillings a-yard." It is needless to observe that Jessie was tall.

"Lady Louisa wore a gold turban with hers; but I shall have my hair dressed by a hair-dresser, and a gold band over my forehead. I tried it one night with a bit of gold

lace that came off his lordship's regimentals; and Thomas, the footman, said he never saw me look so well."

"I'm sure you would," returned Lines; "your features would look quite classical."

"Would they?" said Jessie, unable to appreciate the exact measure of a compliment she did not understand. "But do you think it's certain your uncle will do it?"

"Quite certain," returned Lines; "that is, if we're cautious, and mind our P's and Q's."

"But how *are* we to mind them?" inquired Jessie. "If my aunt was to find out I'm living here with you, instead of being gone back to Belton, as she thinks, they'd be just as mad as if we were married."

"That's the thing!" returned Lines. "The truth is, my uncle's bent on my paying my addresses to the rich Miss Hodgkins—Alderman Hodgkins's daughter——"

"You never told me so before, Jacob!" exclaimed Jessie. "I never heard you say anything about Miss Hodgkins!"

"Because I did not like to alarm you, or give you pain, my love," answered Lines. "I wished to keep the thing from you as long

as I could; nor should I, indeed, ever have mentioned it, had you done me justice; but when I see that you doubt my honour——"

"No, I don't, Jacob."

"I'm afraid you do, Jessie," replied Jacob, "and it hurts my feelings very much, for it's not what I've deserved of you."

"I don't, indeed, Jacob," said Jessie. "It was entirely what that banker said to me that made me leave the money; but I'll go and fetch it to-morrow, and not listen to anything he says again."

"No," said Jacob, "you sha'n't do that; I have made up my mind to have nothing to do with it."

"Nothing to do with what?" asked Jessie, colouring.

"With the money," returned Jacob. "I am one of those people that don't like to be suspected. I can forgive anything but a doubt thrown upon my honour—

> 'Who steals my purse, steals trash;
> But he who filches from me my good name,
> Steals that which not enriches him, and makes
> Me poor indeed!'

And the person I can least bear it from, is my Jessie—

> 'A wound from those we love is doubly sharp.'

"What nonsense!" exclaimed Jessie. "You can't suppose I meant it, Jacob. I'll fetch the money to-morrow morning, I tell you."

"No," said Lines, shaking his head with a determined air.

"But I will, though," returned Jessie; "every farthing of it."

"But setting aside the money," continued Lines, "which is altogether a secondary consideration, and to go on with what I was saying; the important part of the business is, so to manage matters that my uncle should hear nothing of our marriage; at all events, at present, till I could break it to him by degrees. If I could only get Miss Hodgkins to refuse me."

"She'll never do that, Jacob," said Jessie.

"I'm afraid she wont," said Mr. Lines, pulling up his shirt-collar, and stroking his imperial; "still, if she's a generous girl, and I were to confide to her that I am devoted heart and soul to another, and never can be hers, she might see that it was no use persevering. At all events, something may turn up if we can only gain time—who can tell? My uncle himself may pop off between this and Christmas, for anything we know; and a plan has struck me that would be much safer

than running the risk of being married here in London, because some enemy—and I know I have my enemies—might give my uncle a hint of it—and if we're married with a licence, he can find us out any day at Doctors' Commons."

"Can he?" said Jessie. "But where could we be married then?"

"Why," said Lines, "I was telling my uncle the other day, that I wanted a bit of a holiday to go and see some friends I have in the country, and to get a little fresh air; and it strikes me that if we were to get off quietly and be married in some snug place, where nobody knew us, that we should be much safer than doing it here. Then, when we return I could take a lodging for you somewhere at the west end, where my uncle never goes, except it's on a Sunday for a walk in Hyde-park, and then we could always contrive to make a trip to Richmond, or Greenwich, or somewhere, and so keep out of his way. What do you say? Of course, if you see any objection to the plan, there's an end of it; but it does appear foolish to throw away the chance of all my uncle means to do for me, for want of a little management."

"Well, I've no objection," said Jessie, "at all; I'd as soon be married in the country as in London, for the matter of that."

"Well, then," replied Lines, "I'll speak to my uncle to-night, and ascertain when he can spare me. I dare say he'll be able to let me off on Saturday."

"Then shall I get the money from the banker to-morrow," inquired Jessie.

"Just as you please," returned Mr. Lines, with an air of indifference. "Perhaps you'd like to leave it there till we come back?"

"Perhaps it might be safer," said Jessie. "I could get a little, if we want it for the journey."

"I believe, on second thoughts, you'd better draw it out before we go," said Jacob. "Those bankers are ticklish fellows to deal with; they're apt to break every now and then. Money's never so safe as in one's own pocket, after all."

"Then I'll fetch it to-morrow morning," said Jessie.

"Do, my angel!" said Lines. "It's a pity that one's obliged to mingle such gross considerations with our ethereal and heaven-inspired passions; but alas! the necessities

that the imperfections of our nature entail upon us must be attended to; and though for my own part, I could rough it through the world, my delicate Jessie mustn't be submitted to any hardships or difficulties unfit for the softer sex."

"He *is* a lovely fellow, after all," thought Jessie, as she tied on her night-cap that evening before the glass, after Mr. Lines had taken his leave; "and I'll take care to get my money from that stupid old banker to-morrow. Besides the ruby velvet, I'll have a pink gauze, trimmed with blond, like the one Miss Darnley wore at his lordship's ball, and a wreath of pink roses for my hair, and a white satin slip underneath. I shall look better in it than she did, because I'm taller than she is, and my complexion's clearer," &c. &c.; and under the influence of these flattering anticipations, Jessie laid her head on her pillow and went to sleep.

CHAPTER L.

"Con arte e con inganno
Si vive mezzo l'anno;
E con inganno ed arte
Si vive l'altra parte."

"Chi pensa male spesso l'indovina."

"*Watch.*—We will rather sleep than talk; we know what belongs to a watch.

Dogberry.—Why, you speak like an ancient and most quiet watchman."

MUCH ADO ABOUT NOTHING.

As Jessie's tender sentiments towards Jacob, together with her lively anticipations of the ruby velvet dress, were still in full vigour on the ensuing morning, she proceeded to the bank at an early hour for the purpose of demanding her money; which, as the gentleman who had importuned her with good counsel

happened to be absent, was forthwith delivered to her. This was on Friday, and as Jacob had expressed a hope that he should be able to start for the country on Saturday, she spent the rest of the day in preparing for her departure, and her approaching wedding, expending about ten pounds of her thousand, in finery to be worn on that auspicious occasion—a measure which was evidently very far from meeting with the approbation of Mr. Lines, when he arrived in the evening and was informed of it. Indeed, to say the truth, he lost his temper so completely, and said so many ungallant and ungracious things about her wasteful folly and extravagance, and the utter want of taste and judgment she had displayed in her purchases, that high words and a quarrel ensued, which terminated in a passion of tears on the part of Jessie, who took the liberty of reminding her lover that the money was her own, and that she had a right to spend it as she pleased; hinting, at the same time, her suspicions, that Mr. Lines did not care sixpence for her, but only wanted to marry her for the sake of her fortune. An insinuation which so hurt the feelings of that gentleman, that, having started to his feet and

thumped his breast in a very energetic manner, and called upon the heavens to tell him what he had done to deserve such an insult from the only woman he had ever loved, and for whose sake he was about to sacrifice, not only the prospect, but the certainty of a union with the rich Miss Hodgkins, who was dying to lay her forty thousand pounds at his feet, but was also incurring the risk of offending his beloved uncle, to whom he already owed so much, and from whom he had so much more to expect,—having, we say, by this appeal to the powers above, somewhat relieved his injured and indignant feelings, Mr. Lines clapped his hat upon his head with an air of the most irrevocable determination; and bidding the astounded Jessie an eternal farewell, rushed out of the room, and had actually, from the rapidity of his movements, got nearly half way down stairs before he was overtaken and clasped in the arms of his admiring and repentant mistress.

"Come back, Jacob!" cried she. "How can you go on so, when you know very well, in your heart, that I didn't mean what I said."

"I can't stand it," said Mr. Lines; "no

man of honour could stand it!" and he again thumped his breast, where his honour, as well as his feelings, were supposed to be enshrined.

"But you take up every word one says so!" pleaded Jessie. "I'm sure you often say things yourself, when you're in a passion, that you don't mean."

"I may," returned Mr. Lines. "No man's always master of himself; but there are some subjects, I own, on which I'm peculiarly sensitive. As I said before, 'Who steals my purse——'"

"Well, never mind your purse now, Jacob; but come up stairs again, and I'll never say anything to offend you again. I wont, indeed!"

"Well," said Mr. Lines, turning round, and placing his foot upon the first stair, "but I'm afraid you suspect me, Jessie," said he, pausing again—"I'm afraid you think I am actuated by interested motives. If I thought that, I'd leave you instantly—I would, indeed—and never see you more."

"I don't, indeed!" replied Jessie.

"I'm afraid you do!" exclaimed Mr. Lines, with considerable wildness of tone, and clap-

ping his hand to his forehead—"I'm afraid you do; and I'd better go at once—I see I had—and then you never can accuse me of wanting your money again."

"But I wont accuse you of wanting it—I wont, indeed!" returned Jessie.

"Yes, you will," replied the agitated Mr. Lines. "If I should happen to ask you for a trifle to prepare for our journey, for example, or to help to pay the rent of the lodgings, you'll suspect me. No, I can't—I feel I can't! I'd rather die than submit to ask you for a shilling, after the insinuations you've thrown out! Farewell, Jessie!" said he, in a despairing tone, passionately wringing her hand—"Farewell! It's better we should part at once, and for ever!" and he turned to descend the stairs. "You'll remember me sometimes! When there's no confidence, no reliance—" here his feelings choked him, and he held his pocket handkerchief to his eyes.

"Stay one moment!" said Jessie; but Mr. Lines shook his head in a very obstinate manner, indeed, and his right foot descended one stair.

"Only one moment! Just to oblige me,

Jacob, as a last favour! You wont go till I come back?"

"Well, I wont," said Mr. Lines, "as you so particularly wish it;" and he spoke in a tone of patient, suffering, injured innocence; but, forgiving withal—in short, he delivered himself in a truly Christian spirit.

Jessie flew up three stairs at a time, and, rushing to a cupboard where she kept her tea and sugar, she dived down to the bottom of the tea-caddy, and pulled up her nine hundred and ninety pounds, with which, like a descending angel, she descended on Mr. Lines, whom she found smoothing his imperial, but still in the attitude of flight, and thrusting it into his hand, she said, "There, Jacob! now you can never say again that I've no confidence in you!"

"What's this?" inquired Jacob, closing his fist firmly on the notes.

"It's the money," returned Jessie; "all of it, except what I spent this morning."

"Oh, Jessie!" said Mr. Lines, in a reproachful tone, "you cannot suppose that this is what I wanted!"

"Well, at any rate," said she, "you'll not be obliged to ask me for money any more, to

pay the rent, or the journey, or anything else; so now do come up stairs again!"

"Well, I will, if you *really* wish it," said Mr. Lines, turning to re-ascend the stairs, which he did, indeed, with considerable expedition, being anxious to feast his eyes with the sight of the notes, for this was the first time they had met his enamoured view, and to avail himself of the light of the candle to count them.

"A neat sum, enough!" said he, as he complacently buttoned the pocket of his trousers over the money.

"Well," said Jessie, whose eyes involuntarily followed it into that receptacle, "have you spoken to your uncle about going into the country?"

"Why," said Jacob, "I find we sha'n't be able to get away before Sunday — Sunday evening, I think, it will be; but I shall call to-morrow, and let you know all about it."

Shortly after this, Mr. Lines took his leave; and it cannot be denied, treason to love though it be, that as Jessie looked after him when he descended the stairs, she felt certain misgivings; and we fear the question *did* occur to her—"Shall I ever see him again, or is he

actually going off with my money for good and all?" For the truth is, Jessie, like a great many other women, was only half-deceived by her scoundrel; she persisted in deceiving herself quite as pertinaciously, and much more dexterously, than he deceived her; but the efforts of neither one nor the other were perfectly successful. Glimmerings of light, ever and anon, would break in upon her wilful mind, however laudably she endeavoured to shut them out.

But if any such base and derogatory suspicions did enter her head on that occasion—if she passed the night in uneasy dreams, wherein marriages and funerals, parsons and police officers, rags and ruby velvets, were all mingled together in inextricable confusion, and if she awoke in horror, and jumped out of bed before she knew where she was, under the impression that she had just been lighting the candle with a five hundred pound note—if she were, indeed, beset by these disturbing visions —and if they arose from any doubt of Jacob's returning on the following day to make the arrangements for their departure, she did him great injustice, for he duly arrived at the hour at which he was accustomed to make his

appearance, which was towards evening, when he was in the habit of making a circuit to collect small accounts, and deliver the goods purchased during the day. And not only did he arrive as he had promised, but he arrived in a very amiable and affectionate mood, insomuch that Jessie, justly considering that, being now in possession of all her money, he could have no possible motive for being amiable if he did not like it, was more than ever fascinated and delighted with him, laughing in her sleeve at her suspicions, and blessing her propitious stars that had "made her such a man."

"Are there any boxes come here?" said he, as soon as he had indulged himself in a tender salute.

"Boxes?—no!" replied Jessie. "What boxes?"

"Two large boxes that I have bought to take with us. They will be brought here addressed to you, and you must pay for them when they come."

"But I've got no money," returned Jessie.

"I'll give you some," said Mr. Lines, in the most liberal manner.

"But what's to be put into the boxes?" inquired Jessie.

"Oh! my clothes, and a variety of things," replied Jacob; "and now, Jessie, my love, as I have not long to stop, we'll settle our plans for to-morrow. As I expected, we sha'n't be able to get away before evening; about eight o'clock you must call for me at my uncle's."

"My! Jacob!" exclaimed Jessie. "Call for you there! Why, suppose he or my aunt see me, when they think I'm at Belton?"

"They wont see you; I'll take care of that," replied Jacob. "It will be dark, you know; and besides, you'll be in a hackney coach."

"Well, you know best," said Jessie. "But why can't you call for me here?"

"I can't, for several reasons," replied Jacob. "Besides, it would be quite out of our way."

"Where does the coach go from, then?" inquired she.

"You'll see when we get there," returned Mr. Lines, playfully pinching her cheek. "I've a surprise in store for you, but you must ask no questions. All you have to do, is to get a hackney coach, and call for me rather before eight; be sure you are not later, or we shan't get off at all; and if we don't

start to-morrow night, God knows when we may!"

"I wont be too late," said Jessie; "you may be sure of that."

At this crisis of the conversation, the maid-servant of the house called up stairs, to say, that there was a man below with some boxes for Miss Matthieson, and presently afterwards the bearer of the boxes appeared with one of them, for they were so large that he could not ascend the stairs with both at once.

"My! what big boxes!" exclaimed Jessie. "How will you ever fill them?"

"There's my clothes, and your clothes, and a good many other things," said Mr. Lines, hastily, giving her an expressive look, which she did not, however, understand.

"But my clothes are all packed up in my own trunk, already," urged Jessie. But, frowning her into silence, Jacob turned to the box-bearer, and inquired if he had brought a receipt.

"I wish, Jessie," said Mr. Lines, when the man was gone, "you would be a little more cautious what you say before strangers. Now that we are going to travel together, it's a

caution I must beg you to attend to. You're not aware how many unpleasant questions and observations may arise from your imprudent, thoughtless way of talking."

"Why, what can it signify to the man what we put in the boxes?" said Jessie.

"You don't know how curious and inquisitive people are," replied Jacob; "and at all events, I must beg that whilst we're travelling, you'll attend strictly to what I say."

"Very well, I will, if I think of it," returned Jessie; "but where am I to get the things to pack into these two big boxes? Will you send them here?"

"No——" replied Jacob, deliberating; "no;" said he, more decidedly; "you shall bring them with you to-morrow night, and I can tumble my things in, while you wait at the door."

This appeared a very ill-concocted plan to Jessie; but as her lover seemed determined to have it all his own way, she made no further opposition, but promised strictly to obey his directions; so, having settled with the people of the house for the rent of the lodging, and whatever else was owing, he took his departure, and returned to his uncle's, where he had the

advantage of being boarded and lodged free of expense.

The time appeared long to Jessie till the following night—her packing was finished, and she had nothing to do; besides which, she was extremely anxious to start on the road which was to prove the highway to matrimony. At length, however, "time and the hour" brought the desired moment; the maid fetched her a hackney-coach, and, accompanied by her own packages, and Jacob's two "big boxes," she stept into it, and drove to the rendezvous.

Jacob, who was on the look-out, was at the door in a moment; and, aided by the coachman, lost no time in carrying the boxes into the house; the coachman came out again, whilst Jacob, who had promised he would not be ten minutes, shut the door, and disappeared. By the dim light, as Jessie sat in the coach looking out at the passers by, she observed a tall, thin man, who, stopping in front of the house, seemed to be trying to read the inscription over the door; but not being able to make it out distinctly, he turned to the coachman, and inquired if he could tell him if that was Mr. Lines's. The coachman, who had been directed by the number, and not by the name,

said he did not know; whereupon Jessie, unmindful of Jacob's caution, put her head out of the window, and said that it was; asking the man, at the same time, who he wanted.

"I was told to inquire here for one Jessie Matthieson," replied he. "I've got a letter for her."

"Then give it me," said Jessie. "I'm Jessie Matthieson."

"Be you?" said the man, drawing nearer, and putting his head in at the window; "I'll soon see that. Sure enough, it is," added he, as he caught a glimpse of her face. "I don't suppose as you remember me, Miss Matthieson; though it beant so long since we met, neither."

"Gregory?" said she; "why, it's Mr. Gregory, the pedler, that used to come to Eastlake; isn't it?"

"Pedler, or what not," said Mr. Gregory, "it's me, sure enough, Miss Jessie. I've got a couple of letters for you, here, from Eastlake. I told 'em I was a-coming to Lunnun, about a little matter of business, and so they begged me to bring 'em."

"Who are they from?" inquired Jessie.

"One's from your mother," replied Gregory; "and t'other I got up at Graham's farm."

"Oh," said Jessie; "well, and how's Lucy Graham?"

"Miss Lucy's right well," returned Gregory. "Things are mightily changed there since the trial, when it all came out about the new squire at Eastlake, and that it was him that had done it. Miss Lucy's up again, and her father says she shan't be crossed; and it's thought when Mr. Bell gets released, they'll be married."

"And how's Mrs. Graham?"

"Well, Mrs. Graham's but poorly; they say, she's pining away about what she done in respect to Mr. Bell."

"Well, but that don't signify now," returned Jessie, "as it wasn't him that did it."

"That's just as people thinks," answered Gregory. "They say, Mr. Graham can't be brought to overlook it. He says, a bad action's a bad action, whether ill come of it, or no; and maybe he aren't far wrong in his opinion."

"He was always a disagreeable, cross, old fellow?" said Jessie. "Well, and how's Leonard?"

"Well, he seemed down-like, I thought,

too," replied Gregory; "and he's wasted and thin, and some says he's going into a decline; but he's got a pretty colour in his cheeks, and maybe, as he's but young, he'll get over it, if so be as his mind was easy; but love's a sad cross to some folks, Miss Jessie. But may be you'll be going down to Eastlake soon?"

"Not at present," said Jessie; "but how's my mother?"

"Well and hearty," replied Gregory; "but she's mortal sorry for the squire and the ladies."

At this moment, the door of the house opened, and a voice from within called, "Coachee!" whereon, he of the whip having answered the summons, Mr. Lines presently appeared, bringing out one of the boxes, with his aid.

"It be pretty heavy!" observed the coachman, as they made an ineffectual effort to raise it to the level of the coach.

"I'll lend you a hand," said Gregory, stepping forward, and assisting them. "Burnley the keeper's dead," he continued; "but maybe you didn't know him."

"It's an acquaintance of mine," said Jessie

to her lover, seeing that Jacob looked suspiciously at Gregory, whom he had found in conversation with her. "It's Mr. Gregory that used to come to Eastlake;" at which introduction the two men turned to look at each other.

"Come," said Lines, hastily turning away; "help me to bring out this other box—we shall be too late for the coach!"

"You aren't married, Miss Jessie—are you?" inquired Gregory, whilst Mr. Lines and the coachman were absent.

"No, no—not yet;" replied Jessie.

"Going to be?" inquired Gregory.

"Perhaps," said Jessie.

"Whew!" said Gregory, with a low whistle; "there's them at Eastlake 'll have sore hearts when I carries back that news."

"Bear a hand, will you?" said the coachman to Gregory, as they attempted to raise the second box; which operation being effected, Mr. Lines closed the door of the house, the coachman mounted his seat, Jessie called out "Good-by, Mr. Gregory! Give my love to my mother when you see her, and to Lucy Graham;" and away they drove.

"Poor foolish cretur!" said Gregory to

himself, as he turned away ; " that 'ere spark with his black whiskers 'll spend all her money for her, no doubt, and leave her in the work'us afore he's done with her. I never could abide them chaps with big black whiskers. I ha'n't no opinion on 'em whatever—though," added he, recollecting himself, " red ones is just as bad, for the matter o' that; red and black's the devil's colours, sure enough !"

Here his soliloquy was suddenly interrupted by what he thought was the return of the young couple, for a hackney coach drove up and stopped at the same door; so with that laudable thirst for information which belonged to his profession, he paused to see what had brought them back so suddenly. But instead of Jessie and her lover, a stout elderly pair descended from the vehicle ; and whilst the gentleman paid the fare, the lady, having asked him for the key, proceeded to unlock the door, into which they incontinently vanished.

" Them be the people of the house, I suppose," thought Gregory, hesitating a moment whether he should address them. To Mr. and Mrs. Lines, the letters had been consigned ; but as he had discovered Jessie, and delivered

them without their aid, it was not clear that he had anything to say to them; so after lingering a moment, he walked on.

Had he stayed a little longer, he would have seen something worth waiting for; for he had scarcely turned the corner when the door of the house opened again, and the stout lady and gentleman rushing into the street, began to scream and halloo for the "watch!" at the top of their voices. They had a crowd about them in an instant; but, as it was in the halcyon days of the "old Charleys," the guardian of the night came more deliberately. "Watchman!" cried the indignant haberdasher, "what have *you* been about? Here have I and my wife just been out for a few hours' pleasure on a Sunday, and when we come back we find the house has been broken into and robbed! Half the goods taken out of my shop?"

"Lauk-a-daisy me! You don't say so! It must ha' been afore I came on, then," said the watchman, a pacific harmless old soul, who had never made any further advance towards interfering with a thief, than springing his rattle occasionally, in order to summon his brethren, of which hint the marauders, of course, availed themselves to make off.

This assertion of the watchman Mr. and Mrs. Lines disputed, declaring that the things never could have been carried off in broad daylight, a position which the neighbours supported, alleging that if they had, they must have seen something of the process; "for, said they, "the thieves must have had a cart or a coach, or something to carry them in;" whereupon, a little boy lifted up his voice and said that he had seen a hackney coach at the door; but as, on being interrogated, he admitted that it was "just now," and "a little while ago," it was decided to have been the coach that brought Mr. and Mrs. Lines home. In the meantime, the dispute waxed warm between Mr. Lines and the watchman, who finding words fail him, had recourse to his rattle, which he sprang with such effect, that, gradually, not less than half a dozen dim lanterns assembled on the spot, to each of which a venerable individual was attached, who inquired, with a very natural degree of curiosity, what was the matter; and who, on being informed that the house had been robbed, agreed, without a dissenting voice, that it was "werry extrornary!" But as nobody could throw any light on the business, Mr. Lines

was recommended to hasten with all speed to the nearest police-office, to give notice of what had happened, which he did, almost knocking down Gregory, against whom he ran in his eagerness to hail a hackney coach he saw standing still at a corner, and which he hoped might be empty. Gregory had been looking at the coach, too, for it was the one that contained Jessie and her lover, and the two big boxes; some of the tackle had given way, and the coachman had got down to splice it. Just, however, before the breathless Mr. Lines got up with it, the man mounted his box and drove off, whilst he hastened onwards to seek another vehicle.

CHAPTER LI.

"Chi pecora si fa il lupo se la mangia."

"Le chagrin monte en croupe et galope avec nous."

MEANTIME the coach jogged on, those within it little dreaming of the narrow escape they had had; for it had been the intention of Mr. and Mrs. Lines to pass the night at Windsor, where they had gone to visit a friend, had not the unexpected return of some members of the family produced a scarcity of beds in the house; whereupon the prudent haberdasher, not liking to encounter the charge of a Windsor Inn, resolved to take advantage of a coach just about to start, and return to seek repose on his own pillow. Little repose, however, he found, either on his pillow or off of it, that

night, which was spent in running about the town after constables and police officers, and in a vain search after his despoilers. That his nephew was the thief never entered his mind, so completely had Jacob succeeded in bamboozling his uncle; and as the young man had really obtained a certain leave of absence, his disappearance created neither suspicion nor surprise. They had a female servant, however, who was allowed to be out till ten o'clock; but as she did not expect her master and mistress home that night, she of course interpreted ten o'clock to mean any hour that might suit herself. Consequently, when twelve, one, and two o'clock passed, without any symptoms of her return, Mr. and Mrs. Lines made up their minds that she was the thief, and sent the officers in pursuit of her; and, accordingly, as she was directing her steps homewards, about four o'clock in the morning, they pounced upon her and carried her off, together with a young gentleman who was gallantly escorting her, whose vigorous resistance to the affront certainly deserved a better fate.

But such are the freaks of Fortune! Poor Betty and her sweetheart, in their holiday clothes, were locked up for the rest of the

night in a frowsy room, with numerous delinquents of various grades of nastiness and vice; whilst Jessie and *her* sweetheart were sailing down the Thames, with a fair wind and a full tide, in the good ship Martha, bound for Liverpool. Greatly indeed was Jessie astonished when she found herself on the broad river, and was informed by Jacob that their passage had been taken in the name of Mr. and Mrs. Parker. Urgent, too, were the cautions he gave her, as to her behaviour, and the rein she was to keep upon her tongue; and as, whatever opinion he might entertain of her obedience, he had little confidence in her discretion, he took care by his constant vigilance to enforce the observance of his commands. Not a minute's flirtation, or conversation either, could poor Jessie get with anybody, crew or passenger. Jacob was ever at her side—Jacob's eye was ever upon her. It is true, all this espionage was carried on under pretence of the tenderest affection, and the most delicate susceptibility with respect to the purity and propriety of his beloved wife, and being gifted with a very plausible tongue, he was looked upon as a model for husbands, and "won golden opinions" from all

observers. But Jessie, however flattering these attentions might be supposed, did not altogether like them. She had naturally a vast aversion to control, and had had very little experience of it; and she began to think that if this was a foretaste of what she had to expect after marriage, matrimony, even with so "lovely a fellow" as Jacob, would not be quite the heaven on earth she had expected to find it. She even sulked a little; but on this occasion Jacob's temper proved as imperturbable as his resolution was firm. He persevered in calling her his dear Mrs. Parker, as tenderly as ever, and watched her with unabated vigilance. So irksome was the excess of this affectionate superintendence, that Jessie, albeit little given to trace the connexion between cause and effect, actually took some pains to discover the motive of such extraordinary precautions; but in vain; Jacob was impenetrable; and as she was not secure or indifferent enough to risk rebellion, she had no alternative but to sulk and submit.

At length, they reached Liverpool, and glad enough she was to step out of a prison, where she had had little comfort and no amusement.

As they had come by a merchant vessel, which would be lying for some time in the harbour to unlade, and take in a fresh cargo, there was no hurry about removing their luggage, which was accordingly left on board, whilst Jacob conducted Jessie to an inn in an obscure street, where, after reiterating his precautions, he left her.

"Remember," said he, "we are to be Mr. and Mrs. Parker till we are married; after that we shall have less to apprehend."

"I don't see," said Jessie, "what difference it can make to anybody here, whether our name's Parker or Perkins, or anything else. They've nothing to do with our being married."

"That's more than you know, my dear Jessie," replied Jacob. "'There's many a slip between the cup and the lip,' and we may never be married at all, if you're not cautious."

This was a suggestion, though incomprehensible, sufficiently alarming to silence Jessie for the moment. The least hint of losing her promised husband, sharpened her appetite for matrimony exceedingly; so she promised to say nothing to anybody, whilst Jacob went out to survey the land, and inquire what facilities there were for being married in Liver-

pool; a process which Jessie began to think involved more difficulties than she could ever have dreamt of.

And, indeed, the tediousness of the preliminaries were really insupportable. Without anything on earth but the pleasures of anticipation to divert or interest her, in a dull, dark, dirty house—in a dull, dark, dirty street—there sat Jessie, hour after hour, awaiting the return of her lover. He had bidden her not go out, and determined, as he seemed, to be master, she durst not disobey him; and had she been disposed to rebel so far as to make use of her tongue, she had nobody to speak to. The people of the house were too busy to trouble themselves about her; and the only circumstance that occurred to enliven or vary her solitude was, that about half-a-dozen times an hour, the door of the room she was sitting in was violently burst open, the head of a chambermaid, waiter, hostess, or guest, thrust in, and then as suddenly withdrawn, and the door banged to with as much vehemence as it had been opened. At first Jessie fancied that she was herself, in some way, the object of all these incursions, but in process of time, she began to comprehend, that everybody was

looking for somebody, and that somebody was never in the place he or she should have been in. The chambermaid wanted the waiter, and the waiter the hostess, whilst the hostess wanted them; and the unfortunate guests wanted anybody they could catch, to supply their necessities and mitigate their distresses. Some of these apparitions gave utterance to their griefs, by calling aloud the name of the person they sought; the chambermaid, when she popped in her head, would invoke the waiter, and the waiter her; whilst the strangers would generally try both, or pronounce the names of their strayed friends. There was one unfortunate couple that really seemed to be the sport of some malignant sprite.

"Grub!" cried a large red-faced woman, thrusting in her head.

"Mrs. Grub!" presently said a little rotund man.

"I saw your gentleman seeking you, ma'am," says the chambermaid.

"Which way did he go?" asks Mrs. Grub.

"I think he went into number fifteen, ma'am."

Then back comes Mrs. Grub, and once more the door opens, and a voice calls "Grub!"

"I heard your lady asking for you, sir," says the waiter.

"Where did you see her?" asks Mr. Grub.

"I saw her going towards number fifteen," says the waiter; and again Jessie's meditations are disturbed by the invocation of Mrs. Grub.

But this was sorry amusement for Jessie, who felt more disposed to weep over her own perplexities, than to laugh at other people's. However, at length something did happen that roused her attention a little more. This was the arrival of a hackney coach charged with some boxes, out of which stept two persons—a gentleman, apparently very ill—at least, so the cadaverous hue of his complexion seemed to indicate—and a young woman, whose wasted person, feeble steps, and hollow cheeks, told of graves and churchyards in a language that could not be mistaken. He descended first, and then with the tenderest assiduity assisted his companion out of the coach and into the house, when, having committed her to the care of one of the servants, he returned to discharge the coachman, whilst Jessie, too glad to see anybody she knew to remember Jacob's commands, rushed out of the room and down the stairs,

and accosted the new comer with, "My! Fanny Groves!—what's brought you here?"

"Ah, Jessie Matthieson!" said Fanny, "is it you? Why, I think I might ask you the same question."

"Well, come up here into my room," returned Jessie, "and I'll tell you all about it."

"Thank ye," answered Fanny, "I'm too tired; I must go and lie down."

"Very well; then I'll come with you," said Jessie. "Here, lean on me. My! how thin you are! and how ill your brother looks! What's the matter with you both?"

"I've been ill a long while," said Fanny, evasively. "But what has brought *you* here, Jessie?"

"Oh!" said Jessie, "I came here with a friend who was coming about some business. To tell you the truth—but you mustn't mention it on any account, for it's quite a secret—I'm come to be married."

"Indeed!" said Fanny, looking at her figure with some surprise; "I wish you joy."

"But you haven't told me what has brought you here," said Jessie, blushing at the direction of her eyes, and willing to turn the subject. "I thought you were gone back to Belton."

"No," answered Fanny, the tears starting to her eyes; "I shall never see dear Belton again."

"Why?" said Jessie. "What's to prevent you?"

"Because I shall never live to come back."

"Why, where are you going?"

"To America. Vincent thinks the voyage will do me good."

"Fanny, dear, how are you?" said Mr. Groves, entering the room, and not at first seeing Jessie, who was partly shaded by the curtain of the bed. "I hope you're not much fatigued?"

"Not very much," answered Fanny. "Here's Jessie Matthieson, Vincent."

"Jessie Matthieson!" exclaimed Mr. Groves, in a tone that indicated more surprise than pleasure — "Jessie Matthieson! Why, how did you know we were here?"

"I saw you get out of the coach," answered Jessie; "that was the way I knew it."

"Then you're living here?" inquired Mr. Groves.

"Jessie's come here to be married," said Fanny.

"Oh!" said Mr. Groves, apparently relieved.

"Then, perhaps you'll stay with Fanny whilst I go and see to getting the things on board, for I hear the wind's fair, and the ship will sail immediately."

To this arrangement Jessie willingly consented, having used the precaution of desiring the chambermaid to let her know when "her gentleman came in;" and then Mr. Groves having taken his departure, she resumed her seat by the sick girl's bedside, and finding Fanny a better hearer than talker, and very incommunicative, she fell into a discourse about herself and her lover, describing, in glowing terms, Jacob's beauty and graces, and inordinate affection for herself; for, although in her heart she was not thoroughly satisfied with his proceedings, her vanity prompted her to represent her situation and prospects in the most glowing colours. But the shawl she wore could not altogether conceal a circumstance that rendered these brilliant representations somewhat apocryphal; but as Fanny, though not unwilling to listen, being glad of anything that diverted her own sad thoughts, was too depressed and feeble to question or dispute, Jessie had it all her own way; and if she did not succeed in convincing her auditor

that she was the most enviable person in the world, she nearly talked herself into that persuasion. She had, in short, got as far as the ruby velvet, and was consulting Fanny on the taste of the gold trimming, when Mr. Groves returned to say that he wished his sister to go on board immediately. He had secured a comfortable berth for her, and the ship was to leave the harbour with the evening tide; so some refreshment was ordered, and preparations made for their departure.

"Well, Mr. Groves," said Jessie, "so you've been living at Eastlake, Fanny tells me. And how's everybody there?"

"Your mother was very well when I saw her," returned Mr. Groves.

"I mean to go and see them all when I'm married," said Jessie. "And so I hear Lucy Graham is to marry William Bell, after all, if he's acquitted. I saw Gregory in London, the pedler, you know, that used to come to Eastlake with prints, and he told me that Mr. Graham's all for William Bell, and that he wont forgive Mrs. Graham for what she did about him. But if he's not guilty, what does it signify? I think it's much better for him, for now everybody 'll know he didn't do it,

and the real person 'll be hanged; though there's some people wont believe it was the new squire yet. Who do you think it was?"

"It's impossible to say," returned Mr. Groves, helping his sister to some cold meat.

"I wish you could eat something, Vincent," she said, affectionately, observing that her brother left his own plate empty.

"How shocking ill he does look!" observed Jessie. "I never saw anybody so altered! What, is it all about the squire's death you're fretting so?"

"He frets about me, too," said Fanny.

"So Burnley the keeper's dead, too," said Jessie.

"Is he?" said Mr. Groves, starting.

"Yes; didn't you know it? Gregory told me."

"Did he mention what he died of?" inquired Mr. Groves.

"No," answered Jessie; "he only said he was dead. Then you're not come from Eastlake now?"

"No," replied Fanny; "my brother came to London to fetch me."

Presently, the coach was announced that

had been ordered to convey them to the vessel; and, as Mr. Groves appeared very restless and impatient, they immediately rose from the table and prepared to go, Jessie expressing great regret at not being able to accompany them to see the embarkation; "but Jacob would be so much disappointed if he did not find her there when he returned, that she could not think of it."

So she bade farewell to her friends at the door, and then re-ascended to her own apartment, to await the arrival of her lover.

However, the remainder of the afternoon passed, and the evening, still more tedious—no Jacob appeared, and Jessie's impatience and *ennui* began to assume the complexion of serious uneasiness and alarm. What could Jacob be doing? What business could detain him so long? Had anything happened to him? or—could he be staying away purposely? Could he—the doubt would arise—could he have deserted her? Could he mean to leave her there, friendless, penniless, a stranger, and forlorn? There was a little life within her that stirred, as the fearful suspicion ran through her veins, and chilled her heart's blood.

She was so thoughtless, had reflected so

little, had followed her passions so wilfully, refusing to listen to her reason, even when it was most importunate to be heard—and there had been many times when it had urged her to give ear to its voice—that now, when it commanded her attention, it came armed with a mass of accumulated evidence against her lover —evidence that she had obstinately rejected whilst it could be of any use—that she was overwhelmed with its weight. Her doubts changed into convictions almost as fast as they arose, and she felt half-inclined to tell the people of the house her situation, in order that some steps might be taken to recover her money. But, then, if she were wrong,—if Jacob should return? If he were really making arrangements for their marriage, of course she should lose him altogether by such a rash proceeding. She remembered how sensitive he had described himself about his honour. If he really did mean her fair, it would be impossible he could ever pardon such a suspicion and such an exposure.

To have gone to bed with these doubts and questions working in her brain, would have been useless, so she sat up all night, looking into the dimly-lighted street, and listening for

the aristocratic heels of Jacob's boots; and there the morning found her.

How she regretted now that Mr. Groves and Fanny were gone! She might have found a friend and adviser in him, and he would probably have given her money enough to take her to Eastlake; for if Jacob had really deserted her, she had nowhere else to go; besides, he might have directed her to the most likely means of recovering her "fortune," as she called it. For love in Jessie's nature being merely an alloy, was not sterling enough to survive her disappointment, and she was much more eager for revenge than she was subdued by regret. She was in hopes that the ship might not have sailed, but she learnt on inquiry that it had departed by the evening tide. Then her thoughts turned to the vessel she had come in from London—the luggage was yet on board—she would go down to the shore and get possession of it; so she sent for a coach, and desired to be driven to where the "Martha" was lying, close by the quay.

As she descended from the coach, the captain, who was on the deck, took off his hat, and stepped on shore to assist her.

"Good morning, ma'am!" said he. "I expected to see you down here last night, when the 'Halifax' sailed; but I suppose you hadn't the heart to see her go out; indeed, Mr. Parker said as much. But you must keep up your spirits, ma'am; a year's soon gone, and then you'll have your husband with you again. They've got a fine wind. Ha!" he added, looking up to his own mast head; "it's veering a little, and the sky's looking a little rough; but it was fair for them all night, and they're off the coast of Ireland by this time, I've no doubt. It's a great thing to start with a wind, and it was lucky the 'Halifax' took advantage of it; she could hardly have got out now, though it put everybody in a bustle. It was as much as we could do to get our freight aboard, and Mr. Parker was like to have left one of his boxes, but luckily we saw it in time, and shoved a boat off with it just as she hoisted sail."

CHAPTER LII.

"Other sins only speak; murder shrieks out!"
DUCHESS OF MALFY.

"Foul whisperings are abroad."
MACBETH.

THE respectable Mr. Ball thought he had disposed very cleverly of the gun, which seemed likely to cause him so much disquiet, when he carried it to the coach and dispatched it to his brother in London; but he was not aware, that when he delivered it to the coachman, Mr. Henry Russell was sitting ensconced in a corner of the vehicle, and, attracted by his voice and accent, which he recognised, had curiously observed his manœuvres. It was evening, and it was therefore very easy for Russell to see without being seen; and he

watched the box into the front boot, and saw Mr. Ball walk complacently away.

The box was certainly not a gun-case, and he had no reason for suspecting that it contained a gun, except that he was satisfied there was some mystery attached to the gun in question, and that the pawnbroker wished to keep it out of his hands. It was therefore just possible that he might send it away by the coach; and Russell, whose wits were sharpened by love, as well as by friendship and professional acumen, resolved to take advantage of the opportunity that chance had thrown in his way, and to trace the box to its destination. When the coach stopped to sup, therefore, he mentioned to the coachman his desire to see the address of Mr. Ball's package, and having ascertained that it was consigned to Mr. Joseph Ball, Clare Market, London, he decided on paying that gentleman a visit at the earliest opportunity.

The common persuasion that accidents of fortune, good or ill, never come singly, is very often remarkably confirmed by the number of sudden and simultaneous circumstances that, without any visible connexion between one another, contribute to the detection of

crime—especially, and most notedly, with respect to cases of murder — each, perhaps, separated from the rest, undecisive; but the whole, when taken together, forming a body of evidence not to be resisted. These are the fruits of time, which, having borne and matured in her bosom, she puts forth in the perfect season; and it is a harvest that so rarely fails, that the doers of evil, however cunningly their crime has been contrived—though they may believe it buried a thousand fathoms deep from human eyes, may rest assured, that the seeds of their destiny are sown, that the tree is springing, and the blossoms falling, *and that they are only respited till Time is ripe.*

Tom Burnley had a brother named Ralph, who was under-keeper at Hillside. He was older than Tom, and steadier; but if he had not Tom's faults, neither had he his good qualities. Tom was a man who had strayed, through ignorance, passion, and disappointment; but he had a considerable share of generosity and rude honour in his disposition, was rather quick-witted and ready of perception, and withal extremely good-natured. Ralph, on the contrary, was dull, obstinate, selfish, unsocial, and to the last degree avaricious; and

though equally ignorant, setting off his ignorance by a considerable addition of conceit, and an exalted estimate of his own discernment. When Tom Burnley died, Gale wrote to Ralph, to inform him of the circumstance, but without alluding to the accusation his brother had adduced against Mr. Groves; which, believing it to be unfounded, he thought it wrong to repeat. However, in about a fortnight after poor Tom had been laid in the earth, to the surprise of everybody, Ralph arrived at Eastlake, to claim, as he said, his brother's property.

"Property!" said Gale; "what do you mean by property? Why, Tom had not a shilling to bless himself, to my knowledge, long before he died."

"You're mistaken," replied Ralph. "I know Tom's consarns better than you do. At the time he expected to marry Bessy Lee, he had saved a good bit of money—for he was very careful then——"

"I know all that, as well as you," interrupted Gale; "but Tom's been a very different man since that time; and he spent it a good deal faster than he got it."

"Who says so? Did he tell you so?" inquired Ralph.

"I can't say he ever told me so," answered Gale; "but I know very well he had no money."

"Did he ever tell you the squire gave him twenty pounds to make up to him about Bessy Lee?"

"No," returned Gale; "he never told me that."

"He did, then," said Ralph; "the last time he was at Eastlake; so you see Tom had more money than you guessed of."

"But how do you know it? I don't believe Tom would have took it, if the squire offered it."

"Not took it!" exclaimed Ralph; "Tom was a fool in some things, sure enough, but not so bad as that, neither. Warnt it a great deal more than the girl was worth?"

"Not to Tom's mind," replied Gale. "But how do you know the squire gave it him?"

"'Twas I got it for him," returned Ralph. "I told the squire next time he came to Hillside, after the girl died, that Tom and she was to have been spliced, and that it went very

hard with Tom; and the squire promised to give him twenty pounds to make it up to him."

"But perhaps he forgot it," replied Gale. "I don't believe Tom ever had it; and as I said afore, I don't believe he'd have took it."

"But he did take it," answered Ralph. "At first, he said he wouldn't; but I badgered him into it."

"And did he tell you he'd got it?"

"Yes, he did," said Ralph; and this was true, for Tom had said so, to rid himself of his brother's importunities.

"Well, I'm surprised at his taking it," said Gale; "but you know how careless Tom was about money. I dare say he spent it."

"What could he spend it in?" said Ralph. "Till Squire Rivers turned him off, he'd good wages, and that aren't long since; and he ha'n't been poaching for nothing, I take it."

"There's not so much to be made by poaching as people thinks," replied Gale. "If they get it for nothing, they don't sell it for much."

But Gale's arguments fell on impervious ears. There are no persons so wrong-headed, obstinate, and troublesome, as people that have reckoned securely on some pitiful inheritance,

and are disappointed of it. No eloquence on earth could have convinced Ralph that his brother had died a beggar, and that he had himself not been cheated; and as one of his attributes was excess of suspicion, even the pains Gale took to convince him of his error, and to persuade him not to expose himself by making a stir for so absurd a purpose as claiming poor Tom's effects, were misinterpreted, and only resulted in awakening suspicions of his counsellor.

"At any rate," he said, "I suppose Tom left some clothes—you can't deny that?"

"I don't believe he left anything but what he'd got upon his back," said Gale.

"Well, supposing he didn't," returned Ralph, irritated and angry, "where are they? I've a right to get *them*, at least, I suppose?"

"I suppose Joel's got 'em," answered Gale, out of patience.

"What! Joel Gapper? Why, he's a regular thief! What right has Joel Gapper to my brother's property?"

"You'd better ask him," returned Gale. "But, you know, Tom died in Joel's hut, and no doubt Joel had trouble with him. I don't

see as an old coat and waistcoat was so much to leave him for it."

"Trouble!" exclaimed Ralph; "he shall have more trouble yet if he's durst meddle with what I've a right to, and no man else upon airth, or my name's not Ralph Burnley!"

Armed with this *casus belli*, Ralph set out, bent on a hostile, if not a predatory incursion into his enemy's territory; but, as he turned into the village, the first person he ran foul of was our old friend Mrs. Lawson, the serjeant's wife, who, preferring England to the West Indies, had declined to accompany the regiment abroad, and was staying comfortably at home with her friends, whilst her husband encountered the yellow fever and musquitoes in Jamaica.

"Hey-day, Mr. Burnley!" cried she, on perceiving Ralph, "who'd ever have thought of seeing you at Eastlake! Ah, you should have come sooner, and seen poor Tom! Poor fellow, he was carried off in a jiffey, to be sure! People may well say we're here to-day and gone to-morrow! I'm sure I saw him only the day before—no, it was two days before he died, and he looked as well and as hearty as a man could look. I declare I never

was so surprised in my life, as when Mrs. Dunn told me he was dead! I just went into the post-office, to ask if there was a letter from Lawson, for I'm getting rather uneasy about Lawson—they say the men are dropping off like rotten apples, out there. But as I was saying, I went into the post-office, and says I, 'Have you got any letter for me, to-day, Mrs. Dunn?' 'No,' says she, looking over the bag; 'there's no letter; but who do you think's dead?' 'Who?' says I. 'Guess!' says she. Well, I guessed half a dozen people, but I'm sure if I'd guessed till Christmas, I should never have guessed Tom Burnley! Such a hearty strong man as he was! It was so shocking, too—wasn't it? I'm sure it made my blood run cold, when Mrs. Green told me about his thinking he was poisoned. I suppose it was the pain in his inside that put it in his head, poor fellow, for Joel told Davy, the ostler at the 'Bull,' that he suffered shocking!"

"Poisoned!" exclaimed Burnley.

"Yes, you know; he said so. Didn't you hear that?" asked Mrs. Lawson.

"No," answered Ralph, turning very pale, for short as was the catalogue of his amiable

qualities, he was not altogether without fraternal affection—" poisoned!—did he say he was poisoned? Who did he say had poisoned him?"

" Why, haven't you heard how he came to die, and all about it?" inquired Mrs. Lawson.

" I didn't hear nothing, except that he was dead, and that the doctor said he'd died of an inflammation," replied Burnley.

" The doctor couldn't know what he died of," returned Mrs. Lawson. " How should he? He never saw him till after he was dead."

" What, hadn't he nobody to see him when he was sick?" asked Burnley.

" Nobody, but Joel Gapper," replied Mrs. Lawson. " You know, he'd been living out there with Joel, and nobody ever knew he was ill, till, all at once, we heard he was dead."

" And who did he say had poisoned him?" inquired Ralph.

" Oh, it was only his raving, poor fellow! He said Mr. Groves had been out there and given him physic, and poisoned him."

" Mr. Groves!"

" Yes, Mr. Groves, the valet; he's living at Lady Eastlake's, at Little Otterley. He had

been out there, sure enough, seeing Burnley about something or another—something about a gun of his that Burnley found, and had been and pawned."

"And did he give him physic?"

"Yes, he did; that part of it's true. He went out there to speak to your brother about the gun, and found him lying very ill, and in a burning fever; and then he came back to Mr. Bright's—you know he was always a good-natured kind of man—Mr. Groves, I mean — though he's never been the same man he was before the squire died. If you was to see him, you'd scarce know him—he's so altered!"

"But did he give my brother physic?"

"Yes, I tell you; he came in and got it from Mr. Bright's, and then walked out again, and gave it to Tom. It was very good-natured of him—wasn't it?"

"Yes, it was, uncommon," answered Ralph, drawing the back of his hand across his eyes, for even he was moved at such an instance of kindness to the lonely and excommunicated poacher—"and was he with him when he died?"

"Oh, no; nobody was with him, poor fellow!

The first we heard of it was, that Joel came in here early the next morning to fetch Mr. Bright to him; but when Mr. Bright got there, he found him dead, lying out in the road, poor fellow!"

"Out in the road!" exclaimed Ralph.

"Yes, out a good bit from the house, where there's a spring in the rock. His poor inside was burnt up, I suppose; and he'd crawled out there to get a drink."

"What! had he nobody to give him a drop of water?" asked Burnley, wiping away the cold perspiration that was gathering upon his brow, at these frightful details. "Why didn't Joel give him water?"

"Joel had been out all night; you know Joel's like the owls—he sleeps by day and wakes by night; and when he came home, there was Tom lying out in the road. Wasn't it horrid?"

Ralph was too much shocked and surprised to answer. He had felt some regret at the loss of his brother in the first instance, though his mind had been more engrossed by the thoughts of the inheritance than by his grief; but such a death as this for his mother's son, was too dreadful to be heard unmoved. He

therefore quitted Mrs. Lawson, and walked aside for awhile, to recover himself, before he proceeded through the village.

The next person he fell in with was an old woman, commonly called Judy, who had herself a considerable medical reputation amongst the villagers; and there were those who did not scruple to say, that they would rather trust to Judy, if they were ill, than to Mr. Bright. She was very shrewd, and had seen so many sick people, that she really did know something of the symptoms of a variety of diseases; and amongst other sufferers, she had been with the man who had had arsenic administered to him by mistake; and had also attended an unfortunate servant-maid, who had poisoned herself for love, and died in Judy's arms. The circumstances of Tom Burnley's death had struck her as remarkable, and being an amateur in such matters, she had taken some pains to gather all the particulars from Joel, and had even visited the body before it was put into the coffin; and the result of her investigation was comprised in the significant phrase, that "she wished Tom Burnley might have come fairly by his death." Judy did not choose to bring herself into

trouble, and was therefore somewhat cautious in the answers she gave to Ralph; but nevertheless she allowed her opinions to peep out, being too jealous of her own reputation for pathological skill to wholly conceal them; and certainly whatever sinister impression his mind had received from Mrs. Lawson, was not diminished by his interview with Judy.

All ignorant people, especially country people, to whom any subject of excitement is a godsend, love a mystery; an uncommon or anomalous disease, or a shocking unexplained death, is to them, what the debates in parliament, or the fall of a ministry are to the livers in the world. Through Joel's want of suspicion, and Mr. Bright's definitive sentence, with respect to the cause of Burnley's death, the inhabitants of Eastlake had been robbed of the aliment they loved, on this occasion; but a hint was enough to awaken their appetites. They had, in reality, not suspected any foul play in the business; but no sooner did Ralph begin to make significant inquiries that betrayed the direction of his own thoughts, than they took up their cue, and made the discovery that theirs had pointed the same way from the beginning. Nobody, certainly,

went so far as to assert that he was poisoned, or even to avow that they believed he was; but they all agreed, more especially the women, that there was "something very odd and mysterious-like about it; that the idea of Tom Burnley's dying of a fever was quite ridiculous; and that he had, no doubt, very good reasons for saying what he did say, or else he would not have said it;" but, at the same time, they were equally unanimous in exonerating Mr. Groves. His kindness was extolled, and Burnley's accusation attributed to delirium. They accused nobody; but Ralph saw it all as clear as water—his brother had been "poisoned in the garden for his estate," and Joel Gapper was the delinquent. No doubt Joel had extraordinary facilities for the crime; there was nobody at hand to overlook his actions, and as for poison, he had not far to seek for that, as he was in the frequent practice of using it in the exercise of his professional duties; and it now seemed evident, that, after administering the dose, he had remained by his victim till he was speechless; and then, secure that he could not communicate his wrongs, had ostentatiously fetched the doctor.

Under these persuasions, Ralph started for

Joel's hovel, and was put to no trouble in ascertaining if he were at home, for the weather being warm, he was lying asleep under the shade of a large boulder, in front of the cottage, with his two dogs for his companions—faithful attendants, who did not neglect to warn him of his visitor's approach. Unwilling to be disturbed from his morning slumbers, Joel lifted his head from the ground to inspect the intruder on his privacy; but Burnley, too angry to permit this pacific reception, walked close up to him, and before the mole-catcher had time to rise, gave him a savage kick in the ribs, and bade him get up; and as the dogs, not approving of this proceeding, testified their displeasure by flying at his heels, he administered to each of them a repetition of the dose, that sent them away howling. Joel was far from a quarrelsome person; he had his own notions of life, and pursued them, remote from the haunts of man, and without annoying anybody but the moles, and the weasels, and other vermin, in his lawful profession, and the partridges, hares, and pheasants, in his unlawful one—for as for the gamekeepers and their masters, he looked upon them as the

aggressors in their relative disagreements—he had no desire in the world to interfere with them, if they would only let him alone. But this unprovoked assault of Ralph's would have fired a dove. Joel was upon his legs in an instant, and with the first blow of his sturdy fist, drew blood from Ralph's nose. Ralph returned the compliment on Joel's mouth; and thus to it they went; and, being both strong and active men, it grew to be as pretty a fight as any amateur in the line of untutored talent need wish to have seen; and as they grew every moment more angry, they would probably have fought on, till one or other was disabled, had they not been interrupted by the arrival of Gale, who had come on a special mission to Joel. With considerable difficulty, and not till Joel's eyes were nearly closed up, and three of Ralph's front teeth knocked out, he succeeded in separating the combatants, and inducing a pause, till he had inquired what had occurred to occasion such a furious onslaught. Joel simply pleaded, in justification, the unprovoked injury with which his visitor had saluted him; but Ralph gave vent at once to all his anger and suspicion—called Joel a thief

and a murderer—demanded the restitution of his deceased brother's property, and avowed his determination never to rest till he had recovered his inheritance, and seen his defrauder swinging on a gallows.

CHAPTER LIII.

"Fatetur facinus is qui judicium fugit."

"These things come thus to light."
MUCH ADO ABOUT NOTHING.

RALPH BURNLEY kept his word—at least, as far as it lay in his power to do so; that is, he followed up his threats by giving immediate information to a magistrate against the mole-catcher, accusing him of being the murderer of his brother, and the despoiler of his own inheritance.

Obstinate, and fully persuaded of the facts himself, he contrived to give such a colour to the statement he made, that Mr. Dimond, considering that Joel's morals were not altogether unexceptionable, was, if not convinced, very much startled by the story he told, and

admitted, without hesitation, the propriety of instantly securing the mole-catcher's person, and giving orders for the exhumation of Tom Burnley's body.

In the meantime, Joel had taken flight. That Tom Burnley had been poisoned he believed—that is, he believed he had died from taking "doctor's stuff;" and as he did not doubt Ralph's fulfilling his menaces, and was aware that his own love of game rendered him somewhat obnoxious to suspicion, he thought if once he got amongst the lawyers, whom he liked not much better than the doctors, that he should have but an indifferent chance for his life. So he forsook his dulce domum, which, however unattractive it might have appeared to others, was very dear to him; and getting upon the first coach he met with bound for London, resolved to seek a refuge in the great city. Not that he had ever been there, or knew anything about it, except from report; but he had heard how successfully William Bell had concealed himself there for some months, and he trusted it might answer his purpose equally well.

This imprudent step, of course, only tended to confirm the persuasion of his guilt; and

even Gale, whose knowledge of Ralph Burnley made him look upon the accusation as merely the offspring of malice and disappointed avarice, was somewhat shaken by it; but when the body was exhumed, and by the examination of the surgeons it was proved, incontestably, that Tom Burnley had died from the effects of a large dose of arsenic, Ralph triumphed; and there was not an individual acquainted with the circumstances, who retained the slightest doubt that Joel Gapper was the criminal. Measures were, therefore, taken for his pursuit and apprehension, and also to procure the evidence of Mr. Groves, whose absence, as it happened, had been the cause of Gale's opportune visit to Joel. Russell had obtained the gun without difficulty from Mr. Joseph Ball, who, not acquainted with its history, was delighted at finding so ready and liberal a customer; and having learnt from Elias that Burnley had died very suddenly, and that he had not succeeded in seeing Mr. Groves, who had left Eastlake on a summons from a sick sister, he wrote to Gale, desiring him to see Joel Gapper, and inquire of him if he had ever heard Burnley give any particulars of his finding the gun; and he also requested Gale to

let him know where Mr. Groves was gone, and to send him his address.

Why he so pertinaciously followed up the adventures of this gun, he did not himself very well know, but vague suspicions would sometimes occur to him, that it might be in some way connected with the mystery he had so deep an interest in unveiling. That there was a mystery—a profound mystery—somewhere, he was satisfied. However appearances were against Mr. Rivers, he was himself assured of his innocence, and he was very little disposed to believe the deserter guilty. Who, then, could be the criminal? His mind had turned to Leonard Graham, and to the Martin family, but the more he investigated, the clearer their case appeared; then his thoughts *would* sometimes glance at Mr. Groves. The first circumstance that directed them that way, was an interview he had with Lucy Graham, wherein he made her repeat to him every particular, and interrogated her in the closest manner as to all the circumstances she recollected, and also with respect to the words and deportment of all parties in any way connected with the event. That which first fixed his attention was the attitude of Sir John

Eastlake immediately before he fell, considered conjointly with the words he uttered. Lucy had never doubted that Sir John was calling Mr. Groves to his assistance; and had so distinctly represented that to be the case, that it had not occurred to anybody to doubt it, till the idea struck Mr. Russell.

"You think," said he, "that Sir John saw the person that shot him."

"I do, sir, from the expression of his face, and from the manner in which he held up the whip."

"In what manner did he hold it up?"

"In a threatening manner. He held up the handle as if it was a stick, and shook it; and his eyes were fixed, as if he was looking at somebody."

"You say, you judge also that he saw his assassin from the expression of his face—what was the expression? how did you interpret it?"

"He looked very angry—and I think he looked——"

"Well, what else do you think he looked besides angry?"

"Why I think he looked surprised. There was a sort of stare about his eyes, as if he was astonished."

"He had reason to be astonished at finding himself wounded."

"Yes; but he didn't look so much as if he was thinking of being wounded, as of the person that did it. He did not look sorry or frightened, but angry, and I think surprised."

"And what was the exact moment, as near as you can remember, that he called upon Mr. Groves?"

"When he was shaking the whip?"

"And you thought he wanted Mr. Groves to come to his assistance?"

"Yes, I think he wanted him to seize the assassin."

"And he didn't say another word but 'Groves! Groves!"

"Not another word, except swearing an oath when he was hit."

"Did he speak very loud? Did he raise his voice so that Mr. Groves might have a chance of hearing him?"

"No; he did not speak loud—he spoke rather low; I suppose he had not strength to speak louder."

"And directly after he had called on Mr. Groves, he fell?"

"Not quite directly; he stood an instant or so before he fell."

"And in what direction were his eyes turned during that instant?"

"In the same direction—he never looked away till he fell."

"I wonder you were not induced to look over your shoulder to see who it was that had fired the shot."

"I was too amazed and frightened; I couldn't take my eyes from his face; besides, it was all so quick that I'd no time to think. It was only afterwards, when I'd time to reflect, that I comprehended where the shot came from."

"And you saw nobody in the wood, that day, but William Bell?"

"Nobody but him and Mr. Groves."

"And, pray, how long was it, after Sir John fell, before Mr. Groves appeared? What interval of time do you think had elapsed?"

"I don't know, because I fainted. Perhaps it was half an hour; it may have been more."

"And from what direction did Mr. Groves come?"

"From the same direction that the squire came."

"And how did he behave? What was his deportment? Did he seem very much surprised and shocked when he saw his master lying dead?"

"No," answered Lucy, considering a little; "I don't think he seemed so much surprised or shocked as one might have expected?"

"Did that strike you at the time?"

"No; it never struck me till now that you ask me."

"Can you recollect what were the first words he said?"

"I think he said, 'Is that you, Lucy?' or, 'Are you here, Lucy?' or something of that sort."

"Do you think he had seen the body when he said that?"

"No, I don't think he had."

"And what did he say when he did see it?"

"He asked who had done it; and I said I believed his gun had gone off and shot him."

"And did he express any doubt of that being the case?"

"No, he did not."

"And he didn't examine the gun?"

"No."

"Don't you think it would have been natural to do so?"

"Perhaps it would; but I think he was too hurried and confused to think of it?"

"He seemed very much hurried and confused, did he?"

"Yes, I think he did; I think he was very much agitated when he saw his master dead."

Henry Russell's train of thought will be perceived by his questions, and it led him so far as to speak to Lord Belton on the subject. But Lord Belton's opinion of Mr. Groves was exceedingly favourable. His father, the old innkeeper at Belton, was his tenant, and he had known Vincent from his childhood; his character as a servant had always been unexceptionable; "besides," said Lord Belton, "what motive could he possibly have? Sir John was very much attached to him, and he never could hope to get a better situation. He had everything to lose, and nothing to gain, by Sir John Eastlake's death."

"You don't think they had had any quarrel?" said Russell.

"I think it extremely improbable," replied Lord Belton. "Sir John's temper was excellent; and as for Groves, he is one of the mildest, quietest men I ever knew.

Lord Belton's conviction of the impossibility of Mr. Groves' criminality, as well as that of every other person whom he sounded on the subject, together with the absence of any conceivable motive, suppressed for a time Henry Russell's nascent suspicions; though, on the other hand, the accounts he elicited of his excessive agitation when he arrived at the Castle, and his subsequent illness, were not unweighed by him on the opposite side; but it was only by degrees that he began to connect the gun with the other links in the train of evidence. He had not, at first, known that the gun belonged to Mr. Groves; and when he did hear it, he supposed that Burnley had stolen it from him. It was not till Burnley was dead, and Mr. Groves gone, that Gale mentioned to Elias the circumstance of its having been found in the wood on the day of Sir John's death; but even he did not know that it had been concealed, Burnley having abstained from mentioning that circumstance when he learnt who the gun belonged to, because, although it immediately opened his own eyes to the truth, he had no intention of becoming Groves' accuser.

As soon, however, as Russell learnt the par-

ticulars of *the finding*, as far as they were disclosed, he immediately wrote to Elias, desiring him to ascertain from Lucy Graham whether Mr. Groves had had a gun with him when she saw him in the wood; but this was a question she could not answer. She had not been interrogated on the subject at the inquest, and had never directed her thoughts to that branch of it; and now the scene and the action of the drama were so far removed, that she was unable to recall to her mind's eye what had not been earlier impressed on her memory. One thing was easily ascertained, which was—that he had no gun when he arrived at the Castle; and this was all that, now Burnley was gone, it seemed possible to make out on the subject, with the exception of whatever information might be obtained from Joel and Mr. Groves himself. But Joel had never heard Burnley mention the gun till he was dying; and then, as he had imagined him delirious, he had attached no importance to what he said, and had but a confused recollection of it. However, he said he was sure that Burnley had asserted that Mr. Groves had shot the squire, but in what way the gun was connected with the affair, or why Burnley

suspected Mr. Groves of being his enemy, Joel could not tell.

Mr. Groves' sudden departure from Eastlake was, to Russell's mind, another feature in the case; and he no sooner obtained his address—that is, the address which the servants at Lady Eastlake's had observed on the letters to his sister, than he set out to pay him a visit. But he was too late, they had both left that lodging shortly after Mr. Groves' arrival in town. They had gone away, with all that belonged to them, in a hackney coach; and whither they were bound, the people of the house did not know. Mr. Groves had casually mentioned that he was going to take his sister into the country for change of air, which, the people added, she seemed much to need, as she appeared to them to be dying of a decline.

The next news that Henry Russell received, was the account of the exhumation of Burnley's body, and the discovery that he had actually been poisoned, together with his accusation of Mr. Groves, and Joel's flight. Mr. Groves was now, therefore, not only to be sought as a witness, but as a criminal—at least, as an accused person, for nobody be-

lieved him guilty except Russell; but, although active measures were used to discover his retreat, nothing satisfactory was elicited; the most probable account was, that he had sailed from Southampton to Havre, two persons answering the description of him and his sister having been seen to embark from that port; and, consequently, Russell, disposed to rely more on his own energy and sagacity, on this occasion, than that of any other person, started himself in pursuit of them.

But the information he had received was unfortunately erroneous; the persons whose track he followed, and whom he pursued as far as Paris, proved to be a runaway couple, flying from flinty-hearted fathers; and, after losing so much valuable time, he returned disspirited to Havre, where he found a letter awaiting him from Elias, containing the mortifying intelligence that Mr. Groves and his sister had been traced to Liverpool, and were ascertained to have sailed for America by the "Halifax." "A proceeding," added his correspondent, "that leaves little doubt as to his being guilty of one of the crimes of which he is accused, if not of both."

CHAPTER LIV.

"Melius est cavere semper quam pati semel."

"Believe with social mercy, and with me,
Folly's misfortune in the first degree."

LANGHORNE.

WE must now, in the progress of weaving up our ravelled threads, return to our friend Mr. Gregory, whom we left some time since at the corner of Lombard-street, with his mouth open, looking, with no little curiosity, after the hackney coach which contained Jacob Lines and Jessie Matthieson.

His reflections were by no means favourable to the pair in question. He did not admire the part Jessie had played in the affair of William Bell's apprehension—a proceeding which had gained her an ill celebrity wherever

the parties were known. He was aware that Leonard Graham was deeply attached to her, and that she had jilted him, and as he saw the coach drive off, he was scarcely sorry that she was going to meet her reward; for the glimpse he had caught of her lover's black whiskers and imperial, pretty well satisfied him on that head. Gregory was of the old school, and was of opinion that gentlemen of independent fortune were alone entitled to encourage luxurious crops of that description—a prejudice, certainly, on his part; because if people like to disfigure their faces with hair, it seems entirely their own concern, the article being strictly private property, and generally of no value whatever to anybody but the owner. However that may be, Gregory's opinion of Mr. Jacob Lines, formed upon these premises, was not far from the truth. He took him for a scamp, or something worse, who was in pursuit of Jessie's money, and who, when he had got it, would probably leave her in poverty and destitution to lament her folly.

Being suddenly interrupted in the train of these reflections by a violent concussion from a gentleman, who was rushing blindly forward, and wildly calling for a coach, Mr. Gregory

proceeded on his way, turning his mind, at the same time, to his own affairs—especially that branch of them which had brought him to London, and which was indeed a matter of considerable moment, involving no less than the loss of the savings of his whole life.

The reader will perhaps remember to have fallen in with Mr. Gregory on a former occasion, at an inn, or public-house, called "The Green Man," where the worthy pedler supped in company with William Bell, and was afterwards, in spite of the precautions he had taken to prevent it, doubled up with an ill-looking stranger, towards whom he had imbibed a very particular, and as it proved, judicious, aversion; and that by this repulsive individual he was robbed of his clothes, and would have been robbed of his pack, only that it's contents were too bulky for commodious conveyance. But we have yet to disclose the melancholy fact, that, sewed within the lining of the abducted coat, was the whole of Mr. Gregory's fortune, amounting to a sum of seventy-five pounds—his sole dependence in case of sickness or misfortune, and the fruits of many a weary tramp and toilsome journey.

Gregory's face, as well as his figure, was

always more remarkable for longitude than latitude; but there is no doubt that it had increased several degrees in the former direction since this accident. Well it might, poor fellow! Seventy-five pounds made all the difference betwixt wealth and poverty to him. Whilst he felt it securely buttoned over his chest, he considered himself a *warm man;* and, no doubt, it helped to keep him warm—now he was a beggar, and had nothing to keep him warm either morally or physically. At least, he would have been a beggar had it not been for his established character for honesty, which procured him credit with the manufacturers, and thus enabled him to carry on his little trade. But even this had been considerably interrupted by the vain efforts he had been making to recover his coat, which had occupied a great portion of his time, and worn him to a thread-paper with fatigue and anxiety; and still, on this very Sunday night that we have met him at the door of Mr. Lines' shop, he appears as far from success as ever—no tidings of the coat, no traces of the thief.

This was the business that had brought him to London; he wanted to see what the metro-

politan police could do for him. As Mrs. Riddle, the hostess of "The Green Man," had made a great stir at the time of the robbery, and spared no pains to get the thief apprehended, Gregory had remained quiet—a silent but anxious observer of the proceedings, considering that his chance of recovering his coat depended very much on the amount of its value remaining a secret to its present possessor. But Mrs. Riddle's efforts and instigations to the pursuit of the delinquent had for some time ceased. From the interval that had elapsed since the robbery, there was no longer any chance of her regaining her money, and the thief, without it, would have afforded her little gratification. But Gregory's case was different; whilst the seams and the tissue hung together, the chances were that the money might not be discovered, and hope was only limited by the possible limits of the coat's existence.

He had reached town on the Sunday morning, and on the following day, at an early hour, he presented himself at the police-office in Bow-street, for the purpose of inquiring what would be the most advisable mode of

proceeding in his unfortunate case. The magistrate, however, had not arrived, and there were several people collected about the door awaiting his advent—some to complain, and some to be complained of—whilst Gregory, who did not know much of London life, stood leaning against the rails observing the scene. Presently, a hackney coach drove up to the door, and before the coachman had well stopped his horses, a stout man, with his dress disordered, and his face red with anxiety, put his hand through the window, and opening the door himself, jumped out and desired immediately to see the magistrate; and as he came in a jarvey, and all the rest of the company had come on foot, he was ushered straightways into the office. Two or three others, however, amongst those that were nearest the door, took advantage of the opportunity to enter with him, and amongst these was Gregory; those who did not find favour with the officials, were turned out; but Gregory, who looked decent and quiet, was allowed to remain. He seated himself on one of the benches patiently to await his turn for being heard, whilst the gentleman who had arrived in the coach walked restlessly

up and down, and poured his sorrows into the bosoms of the constables and runners who were lounging about.

"It's been a put-up business; you may take your davy of that," said an officer whom the stranger was addressing.

"It's impossible," replied the latter. "I've nobody in my house but a female servant and my nephew. At first we thought it was the maid and a man that was with her, her sweetheart; and they've both been locked up since four o'clock. But I'm convinced we were mistaken; we have ascertained where they both were all day, and all night too, till they came home; and we find the lad's a very decent young fellow living with his parents, and the girl and he are going to be married."

"What sort of chap's the nevy?" inquired the officer.

"My nephew! There isn't a steadier young man in London than *my* nephew! I wish I was as sure of recovering my property as I am of his honesty; besides, he's out of town; he went out of town yesterday morning."

"He aren't connected with no woman, nor nothin' of that sort?" inquired the officer.

"Oh, no!" replied the stranger; "my ne-

phew's quite out of the question; you may rest satisfied of that. One thing we have ascertained, which is, that the things were taken away in a hackney-caach, by two men and a woman, between eight and nine o'clock last night. We have found a poor girl, who was sitting on the steps of one of the neighbouring houses, waiting to see a lady who sometimes assists her when she's in distress, and she observed the coach at the door, and saw the things brought out. She says there were two large boxes or trunks, and that one of the men was tall, and had on light-coloured clothes—the other was in dark clothes; but there was not light enough to see their faces."

"And can't your city police make nothin' on 'em? What does the alderman say?" asked Scroggs, which was the name the constable delighted in—for Scroggs had a great contempt for the city police.

"No," replied Mr. Lines. "They've been at work upon it all night, but we haven't been able to trace the coach, and yet it couldn't have left my door five minutes before I arrived at it."

"And can't they make out nothin' about the woman, neither?"

No," returned Mr. Lines. "The woman never got out of the coach; one of the men stood talking to her—I suppose to divert attention—whilst the other brought out the things."

"Pray, sir," said Gregory, rising from his seat, and advancing towards Mr. Lines, "might I be so bold as to ax, whereabouts the circumstances you're a-mentioning to that 'ere gentleman took place?"

"It was in Cheapside, sir," answered Mr. Lines, eyeing Gregory's tall figure and dust-coloured habiliments, with some curiosity. "In Cheapside, last night, between eight and nine o'clock."

"I was just a-thinking as much, when I heerd you mentioning them 'ere particklars. I see'd the things carried away myself, and helped to put 'em into the coach."

"The devil you did!" exclaimed Mr. Lines; whilst the officer politely complimented Mr. Gregory on the coolness of the confession.

"Oh, I ha'n't got nothin' to confess about it!" replied Gregory. "I was a-seeking your house, sir, last night, to deliver a letter I'd got for a Miss Matthieson—Jessie Matthieson, from

Eastlake, in Yorkshire; you know who I means, in course?"

"Yes, yes; she's my wife's niece," replied the haberdasher, impatiently; "but who was it took away my goods? Where are they?"

"That's more than I can tell," replied Gregory. "As I said, I was a-seeking of your house, and seeing a hackney-coach standing, I axed the coachman if that was Mr. Lines's, the haberdasher's; and upon that, who should answer me from out the coach-window but Jessie Matthieson herself!"

"Jessie Matthieson! Why, she's living in the country, at Lord Belton's," exclaimed Mr. Lines.

"She may be now, but she war'n't last night," returned Gregory. "Jessie Matthieson was in the coach, and I give her the letters into her own hands."

"Jessie Matthieson!" again exclaimed Mr. Lines, turning very pale. "Jessie Matthieson took away my goods! Then who was the man?"

"What sort o' looking man's your nevy?" inquired Gregory. "Has he got a good deal of black hair about his face?"

"Yes, he has;" answered the astonished Mr. Lines.

"Then it wer' he," returned Gregory. "My mind misgived me at the time that it warnt all right, when I see his big whiskers!"

"I'd ha' bet a tizzy it wer' the nevy," said Scroggs, with evident satisfaction. "I'll tell you what it is, you puts too much trust in them 'ere young chaps, and that's what ruins 'em. They've got too much in their power, and then when they gets amongst the gals, they can't help taking adwantage on it."

"If my nephew is the thief," replied the amazed haberdasher, "he must be a rogue in grain. He's not a boy to be led astray; and he must be the d—est hypocritical dog that ever breathed. I thought he was honesty itself."

"Well, I can't say as I think he looks like it," replied Mr. Gregory. "I've never no opinion of them chaps with hairy faces. If their faces be honest, what need is there for hiding 'em?"

"But where did they order the coach to? Where are they gone?" inquired Mr. Lines.

"That's more than I can tell," replied Gregory. "All the young man said in my

hearing was, 'Drive on, coachee, where I told you!' I know they went along Lombard Street, for I see 'em stopping there, whilst the driver got down and mended one of the traces as had given way."

"God bless me! then I saw the coach they were in!" exclaimed Mr. Lines.

"Well, most like you did!" replied Gregory, "for I believe it was you as run agen me, whilst I was a-standing looking arter them."

"They must have gone off by one of the night coaches," said Mr. Lines.

"They'll be off across the water to Calais or Boulogne," said one of the officials.

"Or to 'Merica, 'mongst the yankees," suggested Scroggs. "Has he got any money?" inquired he.

"I—I don't know—I hope not," replied Mr. Lines, sinking into a seat, and looking as if he was going to faint. "I know there was no money in the till; but I never thought of looking up stairs, as nothing seemed to have been disturbed except in the shop. But if it was my nephew"—and Mr. Lines shook his head, in a manner that implied he did not think there was much hopes of his money—"he has taken my most valuable goods," con-

tinued he; "laces and silk stockings—things of more value than bulk—the villain! He knew how to rob me, for I trusted him with everything."

"You didn't happen to observe the number of the coach?" said Scroggs to Gregory.

"No, I didn't," said Gregory; "but I think I could give a guess at the coachman; partickler if I heerd him speak. He snuffled through his nose uncommon, and spoke thick, like."

Mr. Gregory also recollected that the coach was dark, and that there was a large coat-of-arms on the door pannel; and by these tokens, together with his recollection of the person of the driver, there appeared some hopes of tracing the fugitives. Mr. Lines, therefore, engaged him in his service; and they commenced a peregrination through the streets, in search of the coach, whilst the police undertook to second their efforts with all possible diligence; the urgency of the case becoming more evident from the painful discovery, that, as the sagacious Mr. Scroggs had suspected, Mr. Lines was not only minus his goods, but also a considerable sum of money.

As far as finding the coachman went, Mr.

Lines had great reason to congratulate himself on his meeting with Gregory; the police soon hit upon the right man, and as he had no motive for favouring the escape of the runaways, he avowed, without scruple, that he had deposited them and their luggage at the water-side; what ship they had embarked in he did not know; but that was easily to be ascertained by applying to the porters who had taken their boxes on board.

As the immediate conclusion, as soon as it was discovered that they had gone to Liverpool, was, that they intended to cross the Atlantic, Scroggs started by the mail, with what he thought a very fair chance of overtaking them. As he knew neither of the parties by sight, Mr. Lines was advised to accompany him; but the fatigue and anxiety the poor man had undergone for so many days, had brought on a determination of blood to the head, that rendered repose indispensable to his safety; but as Gregory was acquainted with Jessie, and thought he could recognise her lover, he expressed his willingness to go in his place, provided Mr. Lines would pay the expenses of his journey down. As he could do nothing more in London, with respect to his

own concerns, and as he had business at Manchester, with the manufacturer who furnished him with his little stock in trade, this plan answered his purpose extremely well; added to which, ever since he had been robbed himself, he entertained a sort of venomous antipathy to thieves of every description; and the prospect of being accessory to the capture of one, afforded him considerable gratification.

But, alas, the few days that had been lost in hunting up the coachman and the porter were fatal! The "Martha" had made a prosperous passage, and the "Halifax" had sailed, with a fair wind, twenty-four hours before the pursuers arrived. Lines was gone; but Jessie, deserted and penniless, was still at the inn, afraid to betray her condition, lest she should be turned into the street. Her assurances that she knew nothing whatever of the robbery, and that she had, in fact, been robbed herself, might possibly be true; but appearances were altogether sadly against her. That she had been ultimately duped, Mr. Scroggs thought extremely probable; but that she had brought the empty boxes to the door of Mr. Lines's house, without knowing for what purpose they were intended, he found considerable

difficulty in believing. He therefore took her into custody, and carried her back with him to London; where, the magistrate before whom she was taken being equally incredulous, she soon found herself the inmate of a jail.

CHAPTER LV.

"Fugiendo in media sæpe ruitur fata."

Mr. Gregory, having completed his purchases at Manchester, crossed the Mersey, into Wales, and turned his steps southwards, travelling, as was his wont, by easy journeys, and making the best market he could for his goods on the way. It was not much his custom to stop in towns, as it was not there he found his customers: but happening to have a niece settled in Monmouth, he always made it a rule to pay her a visit whenever he went that road. Her husband was a grocer; and when Gregory arrived, which was towards evening, he found her standing at the door, looking out for her spouse, who had gone to Bristol the day before,

on some matter connected with his business, and was expected back by the six o'clock coach. The tea was made, the kettle was boiling upon the hob, and a nice plate of buttered toast was keeping warm before the fire—nothing was wanted but the husband; and ere the salutations betwixt the uncle and niece were well over, the sound of the guard's horn announced the arrival of the mail; and in a minute more it drew up at the corner of the street, and the worthy grocer made his appearance. Mr. Gregory being a great favourite in the family, notwithstanding his humble calling, was heartily welcomed; and a wish being warmly expressed that he would prolong his visit to some days, he sat down to his host's tea-table in a more cheery spirit than since the loss of his money he had been prone to indulge. Nevertheless, his mind was full of the subject; and as Mrs. Price remarked, whilst she was pouring out the first cup of tea, that his arrival in that part of the country was later than usual, he naturally accounted for the delay by narrating his misfortunes. "That's the thing," he said, "that has thrown me so backward; for I've been going here and there, trying to find the rascal as robbed me; and

last I've been to Lunnun, to ax if they couldn't do nothing for me there."

"And do they give you any hopes of finding your coat again?" inquired Mrs. Price.

"No," replied Gregory, shaking his head; "I'm 'feard there's not much chance on it. But, Lord! to see the villany there is in this here world! I've been down to Liverpool, after a chap that's robbed his uncle of a power of money and goods—lace and stockings, and what not—the uncle 's a haberdasher, in Cheapside, Lunnun; this here young chap 's his own brother's child. The father was something in the farming way, down in the north; but as he warnt very well to do, the uncle in Lunnun bid 'em put the boy to a good school, and he'd pay for his edication, and take him afterwards into his own business. Howsomever, the lad ran away from school, though he wer' awful quick at his larning; but he wer' idle, as many o' them 'cute chaps be. Well, nothing was heerd on him for a long time; but at last his mother wrote word as Jacob—his name was Jacob—as Jacob was come back, and that he said he'd been travelling in foreign parts to improve himself; and she wrote how he was very much improved, and that she was advising

him to come up to Lunnun and see his uncle. Howsomever, he never come for two years after that; and when the uncle wrote to inquire after him, the mother wrote word—for the father was dead by that time—as Jacob had got into a sitiation. Well, one day last autumn who should arrive at the uncle's but Jacob!—Jacob comed at last, and such a swell as he wer' when he did come! The uncle, as had never seen him since he was an infant, couldn't believe as it was his nevy, dressed quite fashionable-like, and his face all over hair, like them creturs as is carried about in the caravans—there was one on 'em at Chester last time I wer' there."

"And is it this fine swell that has robbed his uncle?" inquired Mr. Price.

"The very same," replied Gregory. "He made his uncle believe he wer' as steady as a town-made clock, and hadn't no more tricks in him than a hackney-coach horse; but, howsomever, yesterday was three weeks, he robbed the house, whilst the uncle was gone out to spend the day, and started off across the water."

"To France?" inquired Mr. Price.

"No, to the Yankees," replied Gregory. "He got off afore we could come up with him."

"He didn't go by the Halifax, did he?" asked Mr. Price, laying down his knife and fork, for he was indulging himself with a slice of pickled tongue after his journey, and fixing his eyes on Gregory's face.

"Yes, he did," replied the pedler; "that was the name of the ship."

"Then I think I can tell you where you may find him at this present moment," said Mr. Price.

"In the middle of the ocean, where I can't go after him," said Gregory, suspecting the grocer of a jest.

"No such thing," returned Mr. Price. "If I'm not very much mistaken, you'll find him at Bristol; for I believe every passenger that was aboard the Halifax, was put ashore there just before I left it. I saw them step out of the ship myself, and heard the particulars from one of the crew. The Halifax took fire when they had been a few days at sea, from the steward's carelessness in tapping a barrel of spirits, and they were as near as possible all lost; but just when they had given themselves up for gone, they were hailed by some boats that had come alongside from a sloop that had seen their distress, though they had not

seen her; for it was night when the fire broke out. To say the truth, I was very near losing my passage, and not being here this evening, in consequence of it; for I was so interested with the man's account of the scene there was on board amongst the passengers, and the difficulty there was in getting them into the boats—one or two having fallen into the water in their hurry, and been nearly drowned—that the packet was just sailing away without me."

"If he's among 'em, I hope they'll lay hold on him," said Gregory.

"That's doubtful, I should think," said Mr. Price; "for as such an accident as this couldn't be foreseen, they've probably not been warned to be on the look out. What sort of looking fellow was he?"

"A swell-like looking chap, with a crop of black hair upon his face, enough to make a wig for a judge," answered Gregory.

"They all looked pretty hairy," said Mr. Price, "for they were never able to use a razor from the time they left Liverpool. They were caught in a gale off the coast of Ireland; and they were packed so close in the sloop, for she was but a small thing, that they could scarcely lift their hands to their mouths."

"I should like to nab him," said Gregory, his furacious antipathy beginning to ferment; "I can't abide a rascal that 'oud turn round and rob the hand as fed him."

"He'll either go to London, or make another attempt to get out of the country," said Mr. Price.

"He'll never go to Lunnun," said Gregory. "He'll be for going back to Liverpool, maybe, to look for another ship."

"Or try and get across to the continent," suggested Mr. Price. "You may depend on it he'll lose no time, because he'll be sure that as soon as the accident 's known, he'll be laid hold of."

"I've a great mind to set off directly;" said Gregory. "There's an unfort'nate girl as has got clapt into jail along on him—and maybe she warnt up to what he wer' about, after all. Is there ere a coach going to Newport or Chepstow from here to night?" he asked, after a little reflection.

"You may get to Chepstow, if you like," replied Mr. Price; "but you wont be able to get across till to-morrow morning; however, as they were all dreadfully tired and knocked about, it is possible he may take some hours

rest, and that you may find him at the Gloucester Hotel, where all the passengers put up."

Although there seemed little chance of recovering the property, as Mr. Price understood the passengers had scarcely saved anything but their lives, the temptation of "nabbing the thief," and the hope of being of service to the unfortunate Jessie, decided Mr. Gregory, after a little consideration, to start immediately, in order that he might be ready to cross by the first boat in the morning; so, after taking a temporary leave of his kind host and hostess, to whom he promised to return at the earliest opportunity, he seated himself on the roof of a coach that was going to Chepstow, and, on the following morning, stepped on shore at the Bristol Hot Wells; and, after making some ineffectual inquiries on board the sloop, he proceeded to the Gloucester hotel.

"Pray, sir," said he, to the waiter, "can you be so good as tell me, if there be a young man of the name of Lines here? One of the passengers as was brought in from the 'Halifax.'"

"Lines!" said the waiter; "not that I

know of; but I'll go and ask, if you like. Who shall I say wants him?"

"Just find out if there's a person of that name among 'em," answered Gregory; "but, maybe, on second thoughts, as my business is rather of a delicate natur', I'd better speak to the master of the house;" for it very naturally occurred to Mr. Gregory that, if he gave Jacob the alarm, he might make his escape before he could get any authority to lay hold of him.

"I'd lay my life," said the master of the hotel, when he heard Gregory's story, "that he's off to Southampton. It struck me as something suspicious when I heard them inquiring about the hour the boats sail for Havre, for I couldn't understand why people, that wanted to go to America, should be in such a violent hurry to go in a contrary direction. There's three of them gone off to Southampton this morning—two men and a girl; the girl appears to be dying, and it seemed quite inhuman to drag her about with them, but she was as eager to go as they were; and, indeed, I heard the man that seemed to belong to her offering to stop, but she wouldn't. "Oh, no, no, Vincent!" she said; "let us go at once!"

"Vincent!" said Mr. Gregory, "I don't think that can be the man I'm a looking for. What sort of chap was he?"

"I scarcely know," replied the hotel-keeper, "for I only saw them last night by candle-light, and they were so disfigured for want of shaving, and with being knocked about for so many days, that it wasn't easy to tell what they were like. However, he seemed to have been originally a good-looking young fellow enough, but he appeared to be labouring under great depression, and was suffering either in body or mind—I don't know which. He seemed very fond of the girl, and was very attentive to her, and I don't think the other chap belonged to them, for I heard her say she didn't like him, and that she wished he wasn't going their road."

"You didn't hear his name?" inquired Gregory.

"I think they called him Mr. Parker," said the host.

"That's the man!" exclaimed Gregory. "Parker's not his real name, but it's the one he went by when he was aboard the 'Martha,' going to Liverpool, and no doubt he stuck to it in the 'Halifax.' Had he any money?"

"Plenty, if I may judge by the supper he ordered," returned the host. "I dare say he had the money about his person, for they saved nothing but what they had got on; and I think it very likely, if you make haste, you may overtake him and recover it yet. As for the rest of the plunder, it's at the bottom of the Atlantic."

"Well," said Gregory, "as I've come so far after him, I think I'll go through with it, if you'll be so good as put me in the right way to get on; for, to say the truth, this aren't a sort of business as I'm used to, and I aren't up to it so well as some folks might be."

Gregory could not have put his affairs into the hands of a better person; the host arranged everything for him in the most judicious manner; and, on the same afternoon, Mr. Gregory once more resumed his travels on the outside of a coach that was to take him to Southampton.

"As soon as you arrive," said the host, "you'll go to the police-office—I've written to the master of the house you'll be set down at, to go with you—and you'll give them an exact description of the man, and, unless he's

gone before you arrive there, they'll take care he doesn't get out of the harbour."

On his arrival at the end of his journey, Mr. Gregory followed these directions implicitly. Besides his own recollection of Jacob, he had in his pocket-book a description of his person, written by Mr. Lines, particularly specifying the colour of his hair and whiskers, and the style of his dress. This he placed in the hands of the officials at Southampton, adding, for their further assistance, that the person they were to lie in wait for, was "an uncommon swell-looking chap, and that they might know him by his black whiskers from here to Lunnun."

This duty accomplished, as it was considerably past midnight, Mr. Gregory thought himself justified in going to bed; and, as he had been two nights without sleep, he may, perhaps, be excused for having extended his slumbers to a much later hour in the morning than was his usual wont. Indeed, at nine o'clock he was still wrapped in such a luxurious nap, that there is no saying how far it might have been prolonged, had he not been awakened by an irruption into his room—which was a garret

at the top of the house — and hearing the waiter, who ushered in a gentleman, saying, as he opened the door, "This is the only room we've got vacant at present, sir, but we shall be able to give you a better in the course of an hour or two, as we've several people going off by the packet."

"I only want to dress," said the gentleman, "if you'll have the goodness to bring up my portmanteau. It's below, in the hall; you'll see the name of Russell on it. But this room's occupied," added he, suddenly perceiving Gregory's night-capped head had protruded through the curtains.

"Bless me! so it is, sir!" exclaimed the waiter; "I'm sure I beg your pardon. I'm afraid, then, we haven't got a room till the packet sails."

"If the gentleman wouldn't mind waiting a few minutes," said Gregory, "he'll be very welcome to this here room, for I'll be up and out of it directly. I must be down to see the packets go off. How soon do they go?"

"They'll be away in a couple of hours from this," replied the waiter, looking at his watch. "There's two of them going."

"I'll be stirring directly," said Gregory, sitting up in bed.

"I am very sorry to disturb you, sir," said the gentleman; "but I am just landed from the Havre packet, and I want to change my clothes before I start for London."

"You don't disturb me, sir," answered Mr. Gregory, "and there's no need of no apology; for, maybe, if I hadn't been wakened, I might have slept too late, and overlooked the business I come about. I'll be out of the room in ten minutes."

Accordingly, Gregory tumbled incontinently out of bed, and began "sacrificing to the Graces by putting on his clothes;" whilst the stranger, having reiterated his request to the waiter to bring up his portmanteau, as well as some hot water for shaving, descended to the booking-office below, to take his place in the first coach for London.

The difficulty of getting a breakfast, of any description, at an inn in a sea-port town, where one packet has just arrived, and two more are on the point of starting, is considerable; and both Gregory and the stranger, whom he had accommodated with his room,

found themselves standing together in the hall after they were dressed, without a place to put their heads in, or a possibility of obtaining a cup of tea, or a slice of bread and butter. And there Mr. Gregory, who looked like a pedler as he was, might have stood long enough, but the landlady happening to cast her eye over the red curtain that shaded the bar, upon the stranger, who was both a handsome young man, and a gentleman, was moved to compassion, and told him that if he "would excuse it and walk into her room, she would give him something to eat." The young man accepted the offer, and by way of returning the civility he had received, made interest for Gregory to be admitted also.

The viands were consumed in haste, amidst bustle and confusion, and, feeling sensible that their room would be more desirable than their company, they had no sooner finished their repast than they arose, and the stranger having politely paid the bill, they walked into the hall, and from thence to the door.

"I must be going down to the quay," said Gregory; "I suppose the packets 'll be near about starting, wont they?"

"Not for this hour, yet," answered the waiter.

"I suppose my coach will be up directly, wont it?" inquired the stranger.

"In a quarter of an hour, sir," replied the same official.

"Then I'll step in and pay my fare," said the stranger, turning into the booking-office, where having fulfilled his intentions, he was returning again to the inn door, when he felt himself nearly knocked off his feet by his late companion, who, apparently seized with a fit of insanity, darted suddenly from the step where he had been quietly standing, and rushing past him, flew down the street after a one-horse fly, vociferating at the top of his voice, an earnest request to the public in general that they would "stop that 'ere coach!" But as nobody seemed disposed to comply with his wishes, the fly jogged on as before, with this only difference, that a head that had been protruded was withdrawn, and the glasses were hastily pulled up. Mr. Gregory, however, continued the pursuit; and although nobody was willing to take upon themselves to stop the carriage, several persons who had nothing better to do,

joined in the chase, whilst the traveller, concluding that a man of such a quiet and orderly demeanour could not be creating all that disturbance without some very good cause, forgot his coach, and walked after them in order to to see the result.

By the time he reached the water side, which was the direction taken by the troop, he saw the fly drawn up upon the quay, close to where the packets were lying, and a crowd collected round Mr. Gregory, who was holding an individual by the collar, and calling aloud for a constable. The person he held in durance, and who was making the most violent struggles to get free, in the course of which he buffeted Mr. Gregory about the head and chest without mercy, was a young man with a great deal of red hair and whiskers about his face, whilst that upon his head, for his hat had fallen off in the struggle, appeared of a variegated hue—red, tipped with black, like the feathers of a bantam-cock. He was dressed in a coat exactly of the same colour and make as the one Mr. Gregory wore—a resemblance which the bystanders soon had occasion to learn was not altogether accidental, "for," said the pedler, "the coat is mine. This here scoundrel robbed

me of it last October, and robbed the woman of the house, where we was lodging, after."

By this time the uproar had attracted the notice of the policemen, who had been stationed on the quay for the purpose of intercepting the embarkation of Jacob Lines; and pushing through the crowd, they demanded to know what was the matter.

"The matter is," answered Mr. Gregory, that this here rascal stole this coat that he's got upon his back out of a room in an inn where we both slept, last October, and robbed the house after, and a pretty dance I've had after him ever since."

"But this is not the man you described to us," said the constable.

"No, no," answered Gregory; "this is another o' the same breed; but all I wants is my coat. D—n me if I wont have my coat now I've caught you!" for Mr. Gregory's soul was on fire; and, albeit, not given to swearing, nothing less than an oath could express the energy of his determination.

But on hearing this explanation of Mr. Gregory's motive for the assault, a very marked alteration took place in the demeanour of the young gentleman. All struggles and violence

ceased, and in the mildest tone imaginable, he assured his assailant that he was entirely mistaken in his person—that suspecting him of committing an act of that sort, was as absurd as it was insulting; and, addressing himself to the constables, he added that the poor man was probably mad, and he begged they would relieve him from further annoyance; and so strange were the circumstances of the case, that the constables were inclined to entertain the same opinion. The coat was so exceedingly shabby and old—not to mention that it had never been worth much in its best days—that the vehement anxiety the pedler evinced to recover it, appeared to the lookers-on a strong symptom of madness of itself; and to the police, who at his desire had been stationed there to intercept a person answering to a very different description, the circumstance of his falling foul of this young stranger, and insisting on dragging his coat off his back, disposed them to think he was probably some poor half-cracked creature, whose diseased fancy was thief-haunted, and that there was no more truth in one story than the other. The crowd, too, which had by this time collected, without entering so deeply into the metaphysics of the

case, inclined to the same side in the quarrel—with them the assailant is always in the wrong—and as the packet shewed symptoms of moving, and the young man pathetically represented the injury he should sustain if the obstinacy of this madman, as he called him, caused him to lose his passage, the tide began to turn very decidedly against the pedler; the constables desired him to leave the young man alone, and let him go about his business; and the crowd began to hustle him of; whilst the captive, taking advantage of the general feeling in his favour, slipped out of Gregory's grasp, and darting across the road, jumped into the boat, and dived down the companion stairs into the cabin.

At this critical moment, the unfortunate pedler caught sight of the gentleman whom he had accommodated with a room, and who in return had very civilly treated him with a breakfast; and appealing to him, he assured him that the coat was actually his; and having, in a few words, explained to him the cause of his extraordinary anxiety to recover it, he entreated him to stand his friend, and assist him in regaining his property.

"I don't want the scoundrel," said he; "let

him go! Though he deserves to be hanged; all I want is my coat."

"It is very easy to ascertain," said Mr. Russell, aside to the constables, "whether this person is correct in what he asserts or not. If it be his coat, we shall find the money probably where he put it; and, at all events, if the money is not there, he wont, I suppose, care for the coat."

As the appearance of the speaker commanded attention, and as the advice was backed by one or two other respectable persons who heard it, the constables, though very unwillingly, consented to follow it; so the whole party—that is, Mr. Russell, Gregory, the constables, and a certain number of the spectators, stepped on board "The Royal George;" and, followed by some of the passengers, who saw something extraordinary was going on, descended to the cabin.

Several persons, who had heard nothing of this disturbance, were seated there, and amongst them the fugitive, who was entertaining the company with the account of how he had been attacked by a madman, who wanted his coat. "I'm sure it was not worth his having, if he'd got it," added he; "I

merely put it on because one's so apt to get one's clothes spoilt at sea. He'll be very welcome to it, if he wants it, when I get across the water."

At the sound of so many feet descending the companion stairs, the person he was addressing turned his head to see who the new comers were; and as Henry Russell set his foot within the door of the cabin, his eyes fell upon the wan and ghastly face of Vincent Groves.

"Oh, Vincent!" said the weeping Fanny, to her brother, as he was led away in custody, "didn't I conjure you to avoid the company of that stranger; but you would not heed me!"

CHAPTER LVI.

"Aber ich fühls in allem Adern, ich will, ich muss Dich nur sehen."—BETTINE AN GOETHE.

"Tout comprendre rend très indulgent, et sentir profondément inspire une grande bonté."

"FATHER," said Peggy to Mr. Mirliflor, "I'm getting very unhappy."

"Ah, mon enfant—you unhappy? Pour quoi? Why?"

"I want to go back to England," said Peggy.

"Eh bien—we go! What, you want to see somebody there?"

"Yes," answered Peggy, bending her head forwards and putting her hands before her face.

"Ah, I thought you see him no more—never?"

"I thought so too," answered Peggy, "but my heart's weary. Oh, father, I must go. It's nearly the time for the trial, now; and sometimes my mind misgives me, that if they can't prove it against Mr. Rivers, they may try to make it out that William did it, after all. Then suppose he was found guilty and condemned, and I not there! That time, after I'd seen Lucy Graham, I couldn't think of anything but their being married, and I believe it was that made me feel as if I wanted to run away; but, somehow, lately, I just see him in prison, sitting so lonely in a corner by himself, as he used to do—and how glad he used to be to see us—wasn't he, father?"

"Oui, mon enfant," replied Mr. Mirliflor; "he have nobody else."

"No," answered Peggy. "Lucy Graham never went to see him before the trial. I don't think she can love him much."

"Oui, mon enfant; elle l'aime après sa manière—pas après la votre."

This conversation passed across the channel, where, more with the hope of diverting Peggy's mind, than for any other purpose, the old Frenchman had directed his wandering steps. Full of sensibility and the tenderest affections,

without a single object in the world on whom to lavish them, for he had lost every creature that belonged to him in the revolution, and had himself been obliged to fly, having very nearly forfeited his own life by a vain attempt to save that of his brother, he looked upon Peggy as a gift of Heaven; and loved her not only as a child, but as something more; added to the paternal feelings he entertained for her, he admired her as a woman—her beauty delighted him, her sweet voice charmed him, and her very faults endeared her to him. She had had no education beyond reading and writing, whilst he had had a very respectable one, being the son of a chemist at Lyons, but, with a quick perception and a great deal of character, he found her a most interesting companion; whilst her perfect candour and the unlimited confidence she reposed in him, provided them with ample subjects of conversation. He saw that, whatever education she might have had, or in whatever station she might have been placed, Peggy was a woman in whom nature would have been stronger than convention,—a class of women doomed, with rare exceptions, to be misunderstood and to suffer—to be *incomprises*, as the French phrase has it—a

phrase much abused by our neighbour novelists, and put forward as an apology for all sorts of aberrations and extravagances—but a class which, nevertheless, does exist,—and his own nature enabled him to understand hers. Peggy had never been happy at home, for her mother had died early, and the second Mrs. Bland was a coarse, harsh woman, and not remarkable for sobriety, whilst her father, who had a soft heart and gentle temper, was but little with them. She had, therefore, never been so happy as since she had fallen in with the old Frenchman; and as her mother was not sorry to get rid of her, and the indulgent serjeant allowed her to do as she pleased in all respects, there was no impediment in the way of her following her inclination. Neither was the mode of life, for a girl who had never known anything better than tramping after a regiment, so disagreeable as might be conceived. Mr. Mirliflor, though only an itinerent musician, was one of nature's gentlemen; and as he played his instrument really well, and was sometimes engaged to perform at weddings and Christmas festivities, amongst servants and small tradespeople, he made altogether a comfortable living out of his violin, and had actually saved a little

money before he fell in with Peggy. Her sweet voice and pretty young face, the latter making a charming contrast with his pale, mild, wrinkled features, and silver grey hair—augmented his gains, though it also considerably increased his expenses; for many things, both in the way of food and lodging, that he might have thought good enough for himself, he did not think good enough for Peggy; added to which, he liked to study the picturesque in her costume, and was a little extravagant in the article of her dress.

Having returned to York, in consequence of this re-action in Peggy's feelings—a very natural one, for it is much easier to resolve to keep away in these cases, than to do it—they found the assizes close at hand; and the strange circumstances attending the death of Burnley, and his accusation of Mr. Groves, the theme of general discussion.

Joel, at once simple and shrewd—shrewd in his own particular line, but simple out of it—had been soon caught and brought back; his flight having answered no end, but to convince the world that he was guilty, for the tide of opinion ran still in favour of Mr. Groves. It is true, his attempting to leave the country was

calculated to make an unfavourable impression; but then it appeared, on inquiry, that his sister *was* in very ill health, and it was therefore not unlikely, that it was for her benefit he desired to undertake the voyage. Besides, it was not easy for people to accommodate themselves to so violent a revulsion of opinion, in regard to a man of whom they had always been accustomed to think so highly; whereas, to believe that Joel, from some private motive or another, might have poisoned Burnley, did no violence to their imaginations at all. Then, Lady Eastlake, and her organ, Nelly, were stout partisans of Mr. Groves, and their prejudices even prevailed so far as to persuade them that the accusation had originated in some scheme for the exoneration of Mr. Rivers. "Sure, dear," said Nelly, "it isn't Mr. Groves that would have hurt him, that was living like a pig in a potato-field, just as if he was a gentleman born and bred, like the darlint himself! What would he get by putting him out o' the world, but losing his place; when, maybe, there isn't such another in the whole county of Yorkshire—let alone all England." And this oration of Nelly's was pretty much a transcript of public opinion; those immediately interested

in Mr. Rivers, were the only parties that took a different view of the case. From his whole behaviour, his flight, and the indications we have elsewhere alluded to, Mr. Russell himself was fully persuaded that Mr. Groves was guilty of both murders; but the difficulties of bringing the crimes home to him, seemed almost insurmountable; and even he was puzzled to assign a motive for the first; the second he had no doubt was the consequence of the other—Burnley had known too much and was dangerous; and it was a subject of deep regret to Russell, that he had not earlier learnt the history of the gun, since, had he known to whom it belonged, and when and where it was found, he would certainly have sought an interview with the poacher, and never quitted him till he had penetrated the mystery. However, regret was now vain; Burnley was gone, and had taken his secret with him; and all that remained was to make the best use they could of such means as were left them. Of these, Russell's chief reliance was in the examination of Mr. Groves himself, whose spirit appeared so broken, and his nerves so shaken, that he was not without hopes they might betray him, on

Joel's trial, who on this occasion was destined to the sad honour of precedence.

Peggy was received with cold kindness by William, whom she found, not sitting despondingly in a corner, as she had pictured to herself, but full of hope, and cheerful; for since Mr. Graham had given his consent to the marriage betwixt him and Lucy, provided he were acquitted—and as, being conscious of his own innocence, he was naturally sanguine as to the result—his visions of the future were anything but lugubrious. Besides, since the trial, Lucy had occasionally been to visit him; he knew that she was convinced of his innocence, and was perfectly assured that he was the sole possessor of her affections; and under these circumstances, even death itself could not appal him; it was only less happy than life—that was all.

It was one evening about three weeks previous to the commencement of the assizes, that Mrs. Rivers and her daughters were sitting over the fire, with Elias and Charles Danby, Ellen's former and still faithful lover, discussing with anxious hearts the chances, as they might turn for or against them at the approaching crisis, when Mary suddenly laid one hand on the arm of Elias, who was sitting

beside her, whilst she held the forefinger of the other before her lips—"Hark!" she said, "there's that beautiful voice again that we heard last night! How strange that any creature with such a voice as that should be singing about the streets!"

"Open the window, Charles!" said Ellen; "let us hear more of it."

"She's a French woman," said Caroline; "she's singing 'Fleuve du Targe.'"

"I never heard a Frenchwoman—at least, a street-singer—with such a voice as that," observed Mrs. Rivers.

"I never heard anybody with such a voice," said Mary; "and how delicately the accompaniment is played. Only listen to that arpeggio! How even it is!"

"It must be the people I saw to day," said Elias; "an old, grey-headed, pale-faced, little man, with a very spiritual countenance, and an exceedingly pretty girl—pretty, in spite of her tears—for they were coming out of the Castle when I saw them; she was crying, and the old man was consoling her. She couldn't conceal her tears, poor thing! for she had nothing on her head but a blue handkerchief—charmingly put on it was, though; and I was

thinking I should like to make a portrait of her."

"I suppose she has some friend confined in the jail," said Mary, sighing.

"Poor thing! I'm sure we can feel for her."

"How much I should like to hear her sing in a room!" said Caroline.

"It's the greatest pity in the world she should spoil that delicious voice by singing out of doors."

"Why couldn't we have her in?" said Ellen.

"Not now, my dear," said Mrs. Rivers, with a mournful shake of the head.

"Let us send them out half-a-crown, at all events," said Mary. And this was done; and by and by the musicians passed on, and the conversation reverted to the former subject.

When the young ladies were going to bed that night, Mason, their maid, asked them if they knew who it was they had sent out the money to.

"You mean the French people?" said Caroline.

"They're not French, ma'am," replied Mason; "at least the girl isn't; they say she's a soldier's daughter, and that she's in love with the deserter—that's William Bell, I mean,

ma'am; and that it was she that concealed him all the while he was in London."

"But what's the use of being in love with him," said Ellen, "when he's devoted to Lucy Graham?"

"I suppose she can't help it, poor thing!" said Mary.

"And did you hear anything more about her, Mason?" inquired Caroline.

"No, ma'am," answered Mason. "It was Thomas told me; he heard about it at the Castle."

"How I should like to talk to her!" said Ellen.

"So should I," said Mary. "I dare say mamma wouldn't object to our having her in some morning, when she's not in the room herself. We could ask her to come and sing, and then we could get into conversation with her. I dare say Mr. Elias could manage it for us."

"Very easily," said Elias, when he learnt their wishes. "I'll find out where they lodge —probably they know at the Castle—and bring her here whenever you like."

"Any morning before twelve will do," said Caroline; "and then mamma will not have left her room;" and on the third morning after

this conversation, Peggy was introduced by Elias into the drawing-room.

She was dressed more like a soubrette than a street-singer, and looked charmingly pretty; and as her manners were perfectly naive, and her ear for music so good, that she sang with the greatest ease and correctness to the young ladies' accompaniment, they were quite delighted with her; and although they could not persuade their mamma to see her, she made no objection to Peggy's visit being repeated. It was not immediately that they could induce her to speak of herself and her feelings; but they won her heart by treating her as a companion in misfortune. "We, as well as you," they said, "have one that's most dear to us shut up within the walls of that prison; and as we are sisters in calamity, we should be friends." So as it was her nature to be candid, and to melt before kindness, they soon conquered her reserve, and she told them the whole of her little history, whilst she, on her part, learnt to be fond of them, and to wish very sincerely, that, provided William were saved, their father might be saved also.

In the meantime, whilst these things were acting in York, poor Jessie's history was

drawing to a sad close in London. In a ward appropriated to sick female prisoners, she was lying on her death-bed; and on a table in the adjoining room, covered with a napkin, lay the body of a new-born infant. On one side of her bed knelt her indulgent, but weak mother; and on the other, tenderly pressing her hand with his bony fingers, and his large hollow eyes fondly fixed upon her fast-fading young face, knelt Leonard Graham, with his damp hair clinging to his brow, his chest heaving quick with the labouring breath that was not to labour long, and with, as Gregory described him, "a pretty colour in his cheeks."

Gregory—the now triumphant Gregory—had performed a greater feat than he was aware of, when he pursued and overtook the purloiner of his coat. In his eagerness to recover what was of such importance to himself, he had, for the moment, entirely forgotten the immediate motive of his journey; and he never dreamt, when he seized his own vestment by the collar, that he was capturing the stylish Mr. Jacob Lines, who, the first time he saw him, *en blouse*, with his red hair—having escaped about six weeks before from the Glasgow jail—was a very different-looking

person to the "London swell" who had excited his aversion and suspicion in Cheapside. But as we hold that there is neither pleasure nor profit in pursuing the annals of the utterly depraved, we only refer to Jacob Lines here, in relation to his vain and weak victim. He met with the fate he merited, and to which the whole course of his life, and his vices, directly tended; and she met with the fate that was inevitable, and that, if vanity were not blind, she would have merited too; but since we know that it is only them that have eyes that can see, we may pity the folly that never knew wisdom, and afford one sigh to the young life, that has *learnt too late*, and, embittered by remorse and unavailing regrets, is fast ebbing away on the pallet of a prison.

CHAPTER LVII.

"Littera scripta manet."

"Let thy death ransom thy soul."
INSATIATE COUNTESS.

THE process which was about to commence, which awakened so much curiosity and brought so many people together, was not simply the trial of Joel Gapper for the murder of Thomas Burnley, but was an event on which depended great consequences. It was not the mole-catcher's life alone, but one other—perhaps two others—were involved in the result. If Joel had not poisoned Burnley, there could be little doubt, since poisoned he was, that Vincent Groves had; and if the latter supposition should prove to be the correct one, it was natural to conclude that he must have been impelled to the act by some very secret and

powerful motive; and if the truth of one branch of the poacher's accusation were established, it would furnish a very strong presumption in favour of the other. Thus, though ostensibly but the trial of one person, it was virtually the trial of three; and the interest excited was proportioned to its importance. The court was very full; and amongst the audience were several persons with whom the reader has made acquaintance in the course of this little history; and, through the kindness of Russell and Elias, with whom Peggy had become a great favourite, she and Mr. Mirliflor were provided with seats.

The appearance of Joel Gapper was not prepossessing; his habits of life and occupation had given him an expression of cunning; he had small, sharp eyes like a ferret; his features were flat, his complexion of a dark red, his shoulders round, and he had a habit of looking everywhere but into the face of the person who addressed him, or whom he was addressing. When he was placed at the bar and pleaded not guilty, there were probably but two people in the court who believed there was a possibility of his speaking the truth. These were Elias and Russell, his own counsel;

for as there comes a time when people who have been abusing doctors all their lives are very glad to trust those precious possessions to the objects of their vituperation, so Joel, who had always entertained an utter distrust of both faculties, had been very glad to accept the services of a gentleman who voluntarily came forward and offered to undertake his defence.

The circumstances connected with Burnley's death, being already well known to the reader, it would be useless to recapitulate them here, as they were detailed by the counsel for the prosecution. It will easily be conceived that Joel's character and questionable means of subsistence, his lonely dwelling and unsocial habits, the insecurity of friendships that are not founded upon principle, the facilities he had for the crime, in a spot remote from human eyes; the temptation, from having the means always within his reach; and the motive—namely, to obtain possession of his victim's money and clothes—of small value, doubtless, but extremely desirable to one who had so little of his own—were all brought prominently forward; and that Joel's appearance in the village at so early an hour to fetch the doctor, and

his history of Burnley's disclosures, and accusation of Mr. Groves, were represented as parts of a deep scheme of his own, to turn aside suspicion from himself, and direct it against another.

If Joel entertained an ill opinion of lawyers before, it may be imagined in what sort of estimation he held them after listening to this harangue. He could not conceive that anything but the most determined enmity and desire for his destruction could have prompted anybody so to misrepresent his actions and his motives; and it was scarcely possible to repress the exclamations of surprise and denial which involuntarily burst from his indignant lips; for Joel, although his ideas of right and wrong were extremely confused on some points, for, living in one of the most opulent parishes in England, he was naturally as ignorant as the beasts in the field, yet he had his own notions of honour and hospitality, and consequently felt himself as much insulted by these imputations as if he had never wired a hare or snared a partridge in his life.

However, Joel was not where his feelings were likely to be consulted; and his enemy, as he considered him, having told his story,

proceeded to interrogate his witnesses to prove its truth—the medical man, who had examined the body and pronounced that the death had been occasioned by arsenic; the apothecary and his assistant, who stated that they had frequently sold both that and other poisonous substances to Joel; and that Mr. Groves, when he visited the shop the night before Burnley's death, had asked for medicine for a person in a fever, and that the powder given him was calomel; Judy, who had laid out the body, and who described the appearances which led her to believe that the death was not natural; Ralph, who declared his conviction that his brother had money of which the prisoner had possessed himself; different gentlemen of the neighbourhood, who described Joel's mode of living as one that did not render him a desirable neighbour; and Mr. Groves, who stated how he had sought an interview with Burnley, in the hope of inducing him to restore his gun, which he had learnt from Gale that the poacher had found; how he had found him alone, and apparently in a high fever, which he accounted for by saying he had slept in wet clothes; how Burnley had assured him that he had pawned the gun, and had never

been able to redeem it; and how, being moved by his sufferings, he had walked to the village, procured some medicine, and immediately returned and administered it to the patient, shortly after which he had left him, and had never seen him again, nor had heard of his death till he was informed of it at Southampton, having been suddenly called to London by the illness of his sister. He had no enmity against Burnley; on the contrary, he had sought to preserve his life; and he could have no motive for desiring the death of a man with whom he had never been much acquainted, and with whom he had had so little communication for some time, that, till he had inquired of Gale, he did not know that he was in the neighbourhood, or where he was to be found.

In proposing to undertake Joel Gapper's defence, Mr. Russell had not much hopes of being able to satisfy the jury of his client's innocence, though very much disposed to believe in it himself. But the impressions on his own mind that led him to suspect Mr. Groves, were not easily conveyed to others; and though he had spared no pains, he had not been able to collect any more evidence in favour of one, or against the other, than the reader is already

acquainted with. Fanny's history had been known to nobody but Sir John Eastlake and her brother, except Burnley, the woman who had been engaged to wait upon her, and the servant at Hillside to whom she had told it; and of these, Burnley alone had been led, partly by sympathy, and partly by the circumstances in which he found the gun, to connect it with the catastrophe that followed; and thus no rumour of her tragical acquaintance with the Baronet had ever got abroad; from her own father it had even been studiously concealed; and the impossibility of finding any sort of clue to the motive that might have induced an act so inconsistent with the character Mr. Groves had always maintained, and apparently so contrary to his interest, was an impediment to further investigation of the mystery, that Henry Russell found it impossible to surmount. But the point he particularly aimed at, in undertaking Joel's defence, was the liberty of cross-examining Mr. Groves, from whom it was possible he might elicit some light, or at least he might succeed so far as to awaken, or impart those suspicions to other minds that pressed with so much force upon his own; and to the attainment of this object the whole line

of his defence was directed. He dwelt, therefore, with particular force on all the circumstances that not only tended to exonerate Joel, but to criminate Mr. Groves; and indeed it was one of the peculiarities of the case, that the only hope of vindicating his client, seemed to rest on the possibility of affixing the crime on the other party, for that one or the other of them was guilty there could be no manner of doubt. This circumstance gave him considerable advantages, since it placed Mr. Groves, though, on this occasion, only called as a witness, almost in the position of a prisoner at the bar.

That Joel, from the nature of his calling, had generally arsenic in his possession, he maintained to be rather an argument in his favour than otherwise; since it was notorious that Burnley had been living with him for three months; and that, therefore, if he had any desire to make away with him, he might have done it with the same facility before, all the circumstances being equally favourable, and the motive assigned being one that must have existed from the commencement of their cohabitation, as well as at the period at which the crime was perpetrated. But this motive, he

asserted, was merely imaginary; the offspring of malice and disappointed avarice. Burnley, so far from having money, was absolutely penniless; and he produced Gale, who swore that it was his perfect conviction that Burnley had long ago spent every shilling he had; and that with respect to clothes, he did not believe be had any but what he died in. Mr. Russell then detailed the history of the gun; and declared his persuasion that there was some deep mystery connected with it. He had ascertained that Mr. Groves had had a gun—*that very gun*—when he left Calderwood, on the day of Sir John Eastlake's death; and that he had none when he reached the Castle. That, on that day, Burnley had found it, and had pledged it on the next; and that it was a very remarkable circumstance, that in all the interval that had elapsed from that period till the gun was found at the pawnbroker's, Mr. Groves had never been heard to inquire for it, or even to allude to its loss; although it had been a present of his late master's; and was, as the judge and jury might perceive—and here he produced it—a very valuable one; and this part of the story Gale was also prepared to corroborate. He likewise

made frequent allusions to the particulars he had gathered from Lucy Graham, and to Mr. Groves' demeanour on his arrival at the castle, and his subsequent sufferings and altered appearance; and although he was reminded more than once by the judge on the bench, that Mr. Groves was not on his trial, he contrived to deliver himself of the principal points he desired to draw attention to; insisting that the only line of defence that remained open to him was to shew that the other party accused, in spite of all the appearances in his favour, might possibly have a much stronger inducement to the crime than any that could be found for his client. He also produced Mr. Ball, who described Mr. Groves's visit, the manner in which his face was muffled, his earnest desire to get possession of the gun, and his own motives for sending it away. Henry Russell next expatiated on the very remarkable coincidence between Mr. Groves' sudden call to London, and extraordinary efforts to quit the kingdom, and the death of Burnley. It was very true, that his sister was ill, and that a voyage might be beneficial to her health; but it was equally true that she had been ill a long time, and that the remedy would have been more reasonably

applied at an earlier stage of her malady. It was true, also, that Mr. Groves declared himself ignorant of the death of Burnley, and of the accusation brought against himself; but this assertion was quite unsupported by testimony, and was even rendered more than doubtful by the expedition used, when disappointed of one mode of escape, to find another; an expedition altogether inconsistent with the professed object in view—namely, the restoration of health to a young person so extremely reduced as to be quite unfit to encounter so much fatigue.

When the trial had proceeded thus far, night having supervened, the court was adjourned; and Henry Russell, gratified that he had been able to do so much, but burning with anxiety to do more, went home to search his brain for some new argument, and his ingenuity for some mode of detecting Mr. Groves, whose criminality became every moment more evident to his own mind; although he could not see from what quarter the light was to dawn that was destined to disclose it.

But *Time was ripe;* and the light was on the horizon, though he could not discern it.

The reader will remember a certain traveller,

whose horse had fallen in the neighbourhood of Eastlake, and whose arrival was the original cause of Mr. Groves' having become possessed of the packet Davy had procured at the apothecary's. It may also be recalled, that Mr. Groves went into the parlour of the inn; and having locked the door, that he untied the parcel he had got at Mr. Bright's, flung the calomel into the grate, and filled the paper that had contained it with the deadly dose intended for his victim. *He locked the door*, but he was not aware that the shutter, which was outside, was not closed, and that the traveller, who had been loitering about, waiting impatiently for the arrival of the farrier, was coolly contemplating the whole of his manœuvres. It is impossible to guard against every chance; and when people commit crimes, let them be as wary as they will, either some precaution is omitted which leads to their detection, or the very precautions they use excite suspicion. There had been no light in the room till Groves called for one; he had therefore not remarked that the shutters were unclosed whilst he was sitting at the door; and when he had got the light, as all was dark without, he still remained unconscious that he was overlooked.

The stranger was a traveller, who was making his annual tour of business, and who, when he found, from the report of the farrier, that his horse would not be fit to work for some time, agreed to leave it in his care; and having hired the best substitute the village could furnish, he continued his journey immediately to York, where he had an appointment on the following morning. Thence he proceeded northwards, and was now, at the period of the assizes, on his return; having deviated from his direct road, for the purpose of calling at Eastlake for his horse; and having stopped for a couple of hours to bait, he went to wile them away in the court, which, as fate had decreed, he entered just at the moment that Mr. Groves was introduced into the witness-box.

As, though he had overlooked his proceedings through the window, he had rather done it from idleness, and a want of anything else to fill up the interval, than from curiosity, he had thought no more of the matter, till, after listening for some time to the examination, it suddenly occurred to him that this was the same man he had seen in the parlour at the "Black Bull," performing some operation the

nature of which he did not exactly comprehend. No sooner did this idea present itself to his mind, than he clapped his hands to his pockets, but finding that he had not his great coat on, he hastily quitted the court, and hurrying to the inn he was lodging at, he ran to the coach-house, where his gig was put up, to the seat of which his coat was strapped, and having loosened the strap and plunged his hand deep into the right-hand pocket of the coat, he drew forth something which caused him instantly to inquire the name and address of Joel Gapper's advocate.

The family—that is, Mrs. Rivers and her daughters, and Elias and Russell, were at tea, when the servant entered to say that a gentleman wished to speak to the latter, on particular business.

"I have a circumstance to relate, sir," said the stranger, when Russell entered the room he was in, "which I hope will prove a sufficient apology for this intrusion. I do not know how far it may bear on the case of the man I heard you defending to-day, but I have a suspicion that it is in some way connected with it."

Having then detailed the circumstances we have above referred to, he proceeded to say,

that the person he had been observing in the parlour of the "Black Bull," after tying up the packets of medicine, had sat down to write a letter, whilst he had thrown himself upon a bench near the door. Presently afterwards, the occupant of the parlour came out, and walked away, and he, having risen to meet the farrier, whom he heard coming, had kicked his foot against something, which, on stooping, he found, by the feel of it, was a small paper parcel. That he had intended to examine it, and if it proved anything worth preserving, to have given it to the charge of the landlady; but that being extremely anxious about his horse, in the first instance, and to complete his journey to York in the next, he had absently thrust it into the capacious pocket of his great coat, in the corner of which it had lain forgotten till the recognition of Mr. Groves, in the witness-box, brought it to his mind.

"Then, sir," said he, "I ran to the inn to search my pockets, and sure enough there I found it, and—here it is;" and drawing it forth, he presented it to Mr. Russell. "You see, sir, there's the word *poison* written on it; and as it was just such a parcel that I saw in the

hands of the person in the parlour, I have no doubt but he dropped it, whether accidentally or designedly, God knows, when he came out!"

In a quarter of an hour after this visit, Henry Russell was on the road to Eastlake, in a post-chaise and four; and, by the next morning, when the court met, he was ready to produce the testimony of the doctor's assistant, who had sold the arsenic to Davy. Davy was there, to give an account of when and where, to the best of his belief, he had lost it, and how he had returned to the spot and sought it in vain. The hostess was there, to describe Mr. Groves' conversation and demeanour in the parlour; and Bill, the waiter, to testify that, not knowing any one was in the room, he had attempted to enter it, to lay the cloth for the traveller's supper, and had found the door locked.

As Mr. Russell, however, now more sanguine than ever of justifying Mr. Rivers, without the painful process of a trial, and restoring those he loved to happiness, was not disposed to relinquish the opportunity of cross-examining Mr. Groves, he abstained, in the first instance, from producing this decisive testimony, and endeavoured to elicit every circumstance

that could throw a light upon his character and conduct. Amongst other questions, he inquired of him, where he had passed the interval that had elapsed betwixt Sir John Eastlake's death, and his coming to live at Little Otterley with Lady Eastlake.

"I was very ill," he answered, "for some time; and after I left the Castle, I spent several weeks in town with my sister. I was too ill to take a situation."

"And when you recovered, what did you do?"

"I went to live at Dover with Colonel Felton, and I stayed there till I was summoned as a witness on the trial of William Bell."

It was not till he had possessed himself of every information that the most stringent cross-examination could extract, that Mr. Russell produced his witnesses from Eastlake, the traveller, and, finally, the fatal parcel, at the sight of which Mr. Groves, overcome by surprise and terror, fainted, and was removed from the court, whilst Henry Russell, after visiting Mr. Rivers and William Bell, and cheering them with the prospect of their early justification and release, since there was scarcely room to doubt that the assassin of Burnley and of Sir John Eastlake was one and the

same person, returned home to make happy the anxious hearts there, and to meditate on the most likely means of obtaining a full confession from Mr. Groves, for on this his conviction of the first crime seemed to depend, since all researches had failed to detect any evidence of his guilt.

But the evidence existed and arrived, when no longer hoped for, through a channel the most unexpected and improbable — no other than Peggy Bland!

"Father," said she, to Mr. Mirliflor, as they walked home that day from the court, "do you remember that letter, directed to X. Y. Z., that I got at the post-office instead of William Bell's?"

"Oui, mon enfant,—pourquoi? Why?"

"Do you remember that it came from Dover?"

"Non; I not remember."

"Yes; I'm certain that the answer was to be sent to the post-office, Dover, and I know it was a very odd letter. I did not think much of it then, because we were in such trouble directly afterwards about William; and you know I was to have taken it back to the office, but we'd no wax to seal it with, and afterwards I forgot all about it. I wish

I had it now! Do you know, I've a sort of recollection that, when we were packing up, I gave it to you to put your violin strings in, but I'm afraid it's not likely you've got it still."

However, things that are very improbable sometimes happen; and in a little tin box, so soaked in oil that the characters on it were scarcely legible, the identical letter was found, and being found, was carried to the young ladies, Peggy's new patronesses. "She did not know," she said, "whether it might be of any consequence, but she had thought it better to bring it."

And Peggy never did a wiser thing. The hand was easily proved to be Mr. Groves', and by this clue the story of poor Fanny was discovered, and the whole mystery unravelled. Mr. Rivers returned to his home to pass the rest of his days in peaceful retirement with his family, cured of the vice which had led to so many misfortunes. His daughters married the men of their choice — Russell, Charles Danby, and Elias; the last now a very different person to what he was when we met him in Mrs. Wood's lodging; but, as he still retained his modesty, he was never, to the end of his life, able to comprehend how Mary

could like him, or think of permitting herself to be called "Mrs. Longfellow." But Mary said, "she could not remember the time when thought the name ugly." Indeed, they had all seen enough of the realities of life to care little for its shadows. They had learnt their lesson in a hard school, and were the better for it; for though we are far from thinking that adversity, in its actual passage, tends to make people amiable, except in as far as it obliges them to suppress passions they cannot indulge, and assume virtues that may win them the friends and the services they need, yet the flowers it has breathed on, if not quite to blasting, will most times give out a sweeter odour, when the sun shines on them again, than if his beams had never been obscured.

Mary wished Peggy, now more than ever a favourite, to acquire the accomplishments of a lady's-maid, and to come and live with her in that capacity; but Peggy and Mr. Mirliflor could not be parted, so they were established in a neat little music-shop in York, where they flourished exceedingly, and where poor Peggy's love-sick heart learnt to be contented. There even came a time when she could see William without pain, though not without tenderness,

and when she loved Lucy more than she envied her. After Mr. Mirliflor's death, when she was about eight and twenty, Peggy fell very much in love again, but, fortunately, it was this time with a man old enough to be her father, and who, being sensible, amiable, and benevolent, was grateful for her affection, and indulgent to its excess. No doubt he was not so much in love with her as he would have been had she been less so with him, but he made her a kind husband, and she was a very happy wife. At a later period, the worthy serjeant, her father, having lost his wife, came to end his days with his daughter; and whenever Mr. Dickson happened to be at a loss to understand Peggy's feelings, Serjeant Bland always came to his assistance with his old axiom—"That some women are so, and they cannot help themselves."

In consideration of his long imprisonment and much suffering, William's desertion was passed over; and being allowed his discharge, he and his wife ultimately settled at the farm, with old Geordie; for between grief at the death of her son, who soon followed Jessie, and the remorse and mortification she felt at the part she had acted, and the consequent loss of

her husband's esteem, Hannah Graham's life was not long; but there was even a more bitter remorse than hers, and a sadder death-bed, at Little Otterley.

Grievous indeed was Lady Eastlake's anguish, when she learnt that the vices she had countenanced and encouraged for her own selfish ends, had not only robbed her of all that had made life dear to her, but had proved the destruction of her beloved son, and had armed against his breast the hand he most trusted—the tool and instrument of his profligate pleasures.

When she heard it, she bade Nelly shut out the light, for she would never look upon the sun again; and they two sat and wept together in darkness, till by the faint glimmer of a night light, Nelly closed the once-proud eyes; and the broken heart and the withered form of the erring mother were laid beneath the pavement of the village church.

Poor Fanny's afflicted spirit, too, had flown before the discovery of her brother's crimes. The murder of Burnley she never lived to hear of—most fortunately; for she loved her brother dearly; and deep as was the agony his first crime had cost her, she could find in her heart

some grains of excuse for that—at least, of pity, for the outraged feelings that had led to it. For Mr. Groves, he was an instance of the dreadful fruits that are likely to result from a bad education, grafted on weak principles. He had entered into life with no evil intentions, and had only sought advancement by such means as he had been led to believe most likely to conduce to the end he desired; but the path he had strayed into led him where he had little thoughts of going when he started. And let those who do not scruple to employ their retainers and dependants in services that debase their minds and corrupt their morals, beware, lest their instruments should better their instructions, and in some shape or other return to their own lips the "poisoned chalice" they have learnt to drug for others.

THE END.

T. C. Savill, Printer, 107, St. Martin's Lane.

NEW WORKS

PUBLISHED

BY MESSRS. SAUNDERS AND OTLEY,

CONDUIT STREET.

I.

SIR E. L. BULWER'S NEW WORK.

In 3 vols. post 8vo,

THE LAST OF THE BARONS.

By the Author of "Rienzi," "The Last Days of Pompeii," "Night & Morning," &c.

II.

MR. JAMES'S NEW WORK.

In 3 vols. post 8vo,

FOREST DAYS.

By G. P. R. JAMES, Esq., Author of "Morley Ernstein," "The Robber," &c.

III.

DR. M'PHERSON'S CHINA.

Second Edition, in 8vo, cloth gilt,

TWO YEARS IN CHINA.

NARRATIVE OF THE CHINESE EXPEDITION FROM ITS FORMATION IN APRIL 1840, TO THE TREATY OF PEACE, AUGUST 1842.

By Dr. M'PHERSON, M.D., Madras Army, attached to the Service of his Highness the Nizam.

IV.

MR. GARSTON'S NEW WORK.

In 2 vols. 8vo, with Illustrations,

GREECE REVISITED, & SKETCHES IN LOWER EGYPT IN 1840.

WITH THIRTY-SIX HOURS OF A CAMPAIGN IN GREECE IN 1825.

By EDGAR GARSTON, Esq., Knight of the R. M. Greek Order of the Saviour, &c.

V.

SIR WALTER SCOTT'S TOUR TO WATERLOO.

By the late JOHN SCOTT, Esq.

VI.

NEW EDITIONS OF

CHARACTERISTICS OF WOMEN;

LIVES OF FEMALE SOVEREIGNS;

AND

VISITS AND SKETCHES AT HOME AND ABROAD.

By MRS. JAMESON.

New Works Published by Messrs. Saunders & Otley.

VII.

SIR E. L. BULWER'S ROMANCE.

In 3 vols. post 8vo,

Z A N O N I.

By the Author of "Rienzi," "Eugene Aram," "Night and Morning," &c.

VIII.

MR. JAMES'S NOVEL.

In 3 vols. post 8vo,

MORLEY ERNSTEIN; OR, THE TENANTS OF THE HEART.

By G. P. R. JAMES, Esq., Author of "The Robber," "The Gentleman of the Old School," &c.

IX.

CAPTAIN KNOX'S NEW WORK.

In 3 vols. post 8vo,

THE RITTMEISTER'S BUDGET.

A COMPANION FOR GERMAN TOURISTS.

By CAPTAIN KNOX, Author of "Hardness," "Softness," &c.

X.

MR. JAMES'S NEW HISTORICAL WORK.

In 8vo,

THE LIFE AND TIMES OF RICHARD CŒUR-DE-LION.

By G. P. R. JAMES, Esq., Author of "Richelieu," "Life of Louis XIV." &c.

XI.

In 3 vols. post 8vo,

HOME SCENES AND FOREIGN RECOLLECTIONS.

By LADY CHATTERTON.

XII.

M. DE TOCQUEVILLE'S DEMOCRACY IN AMERICA.

Vols. III. and IV.

Also New Editions of Vols. I. and II.

XIII.

SIR E. L. BULWER'S PROSE WORKS,

Twelve Vols. at 6s., beautifully illustrated;

AND DRAMATIC WORKS,

One Volume.

XIV.

Gratis, and post free,

HINTS FOR THE FORMATION OF READING SOCIETIES

THROUGHOUT THE KINGDOM.

New Works Published by Messrs. Saunders & Otley.

Price 5s. bound,

BOYLE'S COURT AND FASHIONABLE GUIDE,

And Town Visiting Directory

For 1844.

Containing Street and Alphabetical arrangements of the Names and Places of abode in Town and Country of the Nobility and Gentry, Members of both Houses of Parliament, Foreign Ministers, Public Institutions, Club Houses, Hotels, &c.; to which are added, the Inns of Court.

BOYLE'S COURT GUIDE is a book of hourly reference, always lying upon the Library Tables of Royalty, the inseparable Carriage Companion of the Nobility and Gentry, and constantly in the hands of all respectable Classes.

This New Edition has undergone a thorough revision, and its accuracy has been insured by personal application at the Residences of the Nobility and Gentry, under whose sanction this work has obtained its present unexampled popularity.

In 1 vol. royal 8vo, bound,

MR. LODGE'S PEERAGE AND BARONETAGE

For 1844.

WITH THE ARMS OF THE PEERS BEAUTIFULLY ENGRAVED; AND THE ARMS OF THE PRINCE OF WALES, FROM THE DRAWING IN THE POSSESSION OF HER MAJESTY.

The Thirteenth Edition, thoroughly Revised & Corrected to the Present Date.

In accordance with the suggestion contained in the following letter, received from a Noble Lord, every page of this new Edition has undergone a careful examination, and the account of each family has been authenticated by their own revision.

(NOTE TO MR. LODGE.)

"Lord B. presents his compliments to Mr. Lodge, and begs to assure him, that he has looked over the enclosed account of his family with great attention, and finds it perfectly correct. Lord B. hopes Mr. Lodge will permit him to add, that he has never yet found so few mistakes in any publication of the kind as in his last edition; and if every Peer will carefully correct the paper which Mr. Lodge sends to him, a good and correct Peerage will at last be published."

☞ *Communications for each of the above are respectfully requested to be addressed to the Editors, at the Publishers'*, MESSRS. SAUNDERS AND OTLEY, *Conduit Street.*

For Authors Publishing.

Now Ready, Fourth Edition, price 2s. 6d., cloth gilt, or 3s. post free,

THE AUTHOR'S PRINTING AND PUBLISHING ASSISTANT.

A Guide to the Printing, Correcting, and Publishing New Works, comprising Explanations of the Process of Printing; Preparation and Calculation of Manuscripts; Choice of Paper, Type, Binding, Illustrations, Publishing, Advertising, Estimates of Cost for Large or Small Editions, &c.; with an Exemplification and Description of the Typographical Marks used in the Correction of the Press.

"Every one who has written or who may write for the Press, should possess this work."—*Metropolitan.*

*** AUTHORS desirous of having their Works reviewed in

THE METROPOLITAN MAGAZINE

are requested to direct copies to be forwarded to the Editor, at the Publishers" Messrs. Saunders and Otley, Conduit Street, before the 15th of each month. The ability and impartiality displayed in this department of "The Metropolitan" are well known, and its Reviews constantly quoted as of the first Critical Authority.

Dedicated by Permission to Her Royal Highness the Duchess of Kent.

In One small Volume, bound in Silk, with coloured Plates, Ninth Edition, revised,

BY THE EDITOR OF "THE FORGET ME NOT,"

THE LANGUAGE OF FLOWERS.

"By all those token flowers that tell
What words can never speak so well."
BYRON.

"There is something very pleasing in enduing flowers with sentiments appropriate to their forms, colours, and fragrance; the simple science that this little volume professes to teach, must become popular among all classes, but more particularly with the lovers of flowers. It turns the hue of a petal into the expression of a feeling, and conveys on the wings of aromatic sweets the most delicate sentiments."—*Metropolitan.*

In One small Volume, elegantly bound, with Twelve coloured Plates,

THE LANGUAGE OF BIRDS.

COMPRISING POETICAL AND PROSE ILLUSTRATIONS OF THE MOST FAVORITE CAGE BIRDS.

BY MRS. G. SPRATT.

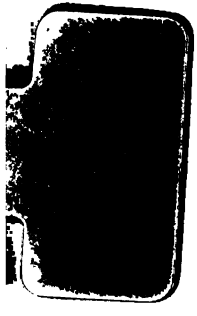
"The subject I have chosen, is, to my fancy, one full of interest; for of all animated nature (next to my own species) birds are the most interesting and beautiful of God's creatures."—*Preface.*

In One small Volume, elegantly bound,

THE BOOK OF FLOWERS.

BY MRS. HALE.

"A Flower I love,
Not for itself, but that its name is link'd
With names I love—a talisman of hope
And memory."

"My purpose in arranging this little work was to combine, with the names and remembrances of flowers, a selection of sentiments from our best Poets."—*Preface.*

SAUNDERS AND OTLEY, Conduit Street, Hanover Square.